

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

Department of Political and Social Sciences

**High Politics in The Low Countries:
Functions and Effects of Coalition Policy Agreements
in Belgium and The Netherlands**

by

Arco Timmermans

Thesis submitted for assessment with
a view to obtaining the Degree of Doctor of the
European University Institute

Florence, January 1996

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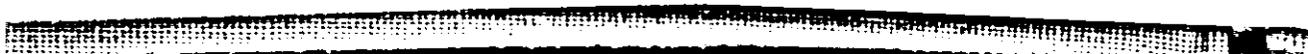


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Florence, January 1996

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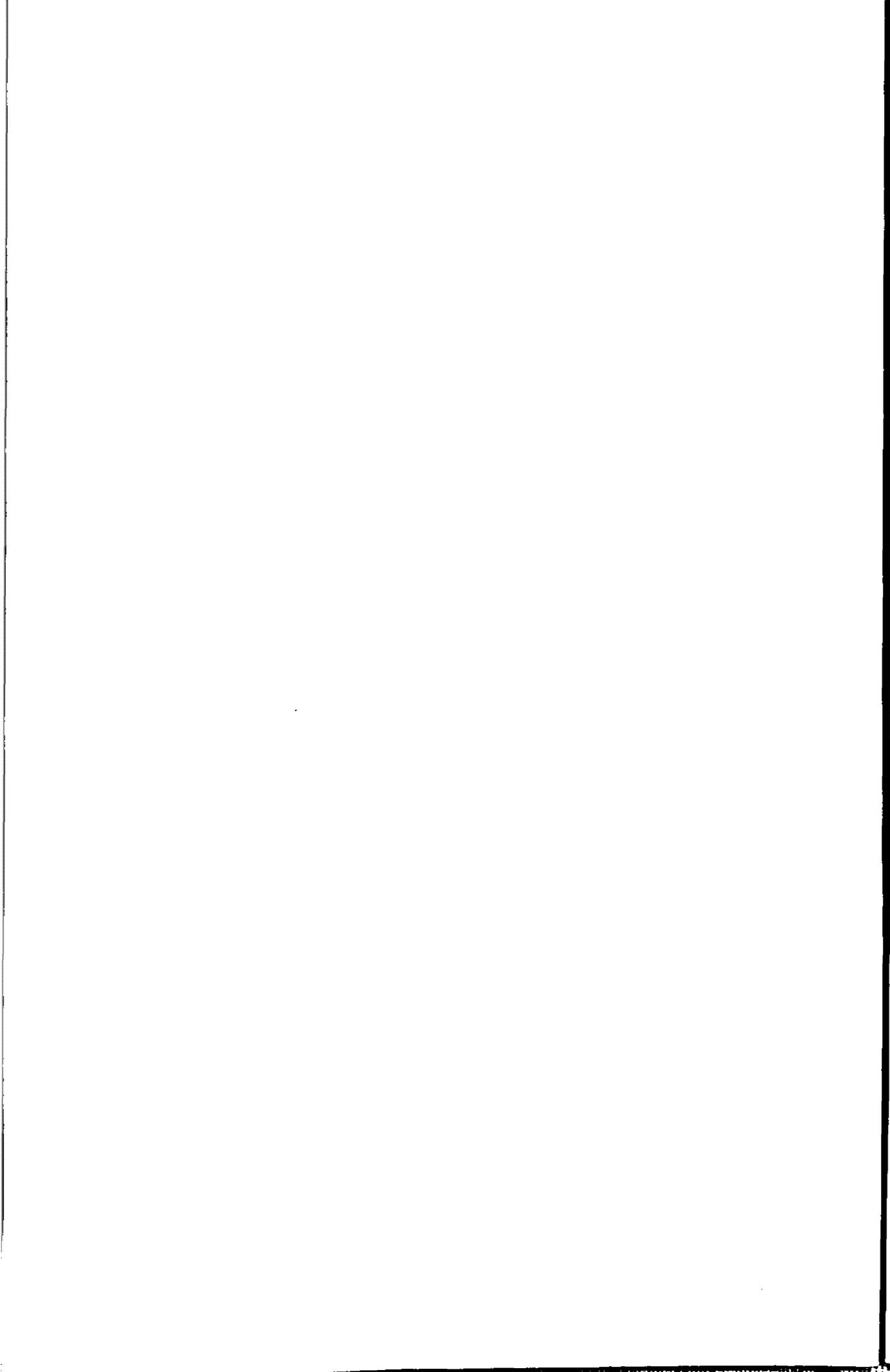
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1

Coalition Governments and Policy Agreements: Introduction

In the thirty years of history of coalition research, almost permanent asymmetry has existed between the theory and practice of coalition governments. This asymmetry has taken two forms which have emerged successively.

First, for a long time, there was a mismatch between certain deductive theories and the phenomena these theories were supposed to explain or predict. This was most clearly the case with the formation of a coalition, where traditionally attention in coalition research was focused. Most basic theories on coalition formation began to be criticised for their simplifications, in particular for largely ignoring the policy motivations of political parties. The elements of ideology and *policy distance* were introduced in later theories, which in turn were replaced by theories which began to consider government formation as a real process of bargaining between parties or party leaders. These theories had more empirical relevance, but they often concerned bargaining over the distribution of cabinet portfolios rather than policy issues.

Second, asymmetry existed because theoretical concern was focused typically on government formation and to a smaller extent on the end of coalitions, rather than on the *life* of coalition governments. Even in countries known for long coalition formation and frequent coalition crises, the 'life' still takes most of the time that parties interact in coalition systems. The consequence of this theoretical neglect has been that accounts of the life of governments are largely the domain of country specialists. For this reason, studies of governments and policymaking have come to form a distinct field of research. With the installation of coalition governments, coalition theory thus far comes to a halt, or takes a big leap to the end of governments.

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND POLICY

Bargaining between parties is one of the key features of coalition government. In most

approaches to coalition government, which focus on the formation stage, interparty bargaining is implicit. Despite the fact that coalition theory has become more realistic by taking into account the different motivations of parties, thus paying attention not only to the desire to be in power, but also to the policy intentions of parties, coalition bargaining has hardly been dealt with as a process. Bargaining results in a national executive but possibly also in some form of agreement on coalition policy. The process of bargaining and its consequences has received little systematic attention from coalition researchers, both in theoretical and in comparative work. Budge & Keman note in their book *Parties and Democracy*, one of the few systematic studies of the formation and functioning of coalition governments, 'agreements of this kind are only patchily reported anywhere, even in otherwise detailed accounts of the political situation' (1990: 83). These agreements may be more or less complete, and vary in scope and specificity. Moreover, they may involve interparty as well as intraparty negotiations.

Generally, a coalition policy agreement may be seen to link government formation to the life of the government. Though each party will estimate its policy payoffs before the government takes off, these payoffs concern intentions, which can only begin to have a substantive meaning once the government is in office. In addition, during the life of the government, policy bargaining may be continued. This may be on different issues, but also on the same issues as those discussed during the formation of the government, especially if the formation talks did not yield very concrete results. Thus, bargaining on coalition policy is a dynamic and continuous process.

This more realistic image of coalition bargaining does not preclude the possibility of identifying, for analytical purposes, a beginning and an end to the process: government formation and the moment of dissolution. Government formation may be preceded and the end of the government followed by parliamentary elections, but in some countries this is not always the case. Often, an issue that triggers the fall of a coalition government is high on the agenda in the formation of a new government. This is partly because in many countries it is the convention that conflictual issues are not dealt with by the government if it has caretaker status, which happens after it breaks down or is dissolved until new elections follow. This setting of the formation agenda may take place even if there is a (partial) change of parties.

From country reports we know that there is considerable variation in the time spent on policy negotiations during government formation, as there is variation in the length of government formation. This will also apply to the output of these negotiations, though much less is known about this.

In this respect, we could take a sceptical stand and wonder whether negotiations on policy during government formation actually mean anything, and bear any relevance to what happens later in the coalition. In their book *Multiparty Government. The Politics of Coalition in Western Europe* (1990), Michael Laver and Norman Schofield argue that interparty policy

negotiations often have a symbolic purpose at coalitional level, confirming pre-existing agreements rather than really establishing agreement on manifest policy conflicts. If parties are willing to form a coalition, it is argued, why would they bother about policies (and certainly conflictual ones) in advance and constrain themselves by formulating intentions which only commit them? Gregory Luebbert (1986) asserts that negotiations during government formation have mainly intraparty purposes. Party leaders are seen to use these negotiations to show their concern for a number of policy principles which are central to their respective parties, to secure their future as party leader. These views imply doubts about the significance of policy bargaining in government formation and as a consequence, of the impact of such bargaining on the policymaking latitude of the government which ensues from the negotiations.

The question here is whether such general views give an adequate picture of the process and results of policy negotiations during coalition formation. To answer this question, we need to take into account findings from empirical research, and if these are not available, there is a clear need for such research.

The subject of policy negotiations before governments take office and the effects of such negotiations during the life of governments can also be studied from a point of view that contrasts with the viewpoint given above. In this alternative view, government formation is an arena *par excellence* for bargaining on coalition policy. This may be because discussions between party leaders and, eventually, other party spokespeople can be more informal or even held in secret and therefore are less exposed to party followers and public opinion. As a consequence, party spokespeople may be less induced (or pressed) to be intransigent on policy issues, and instead reach agreement on conflictual matters relatively easily. Apart from this context which facilitates cooperation, the formation stage also enables policymakers to circumvent, at least for some time, the formal legislative procedures which often hold up the policymaking process for a considerable length of time, though there may be good reasons for this from the perspective of democratic theory.

It is true that the advantage of invisible politics may be reduced if agreements are made public. When party leaders present the results of negotiations, each respective party or different sections or factions within individual parties may make an estimation of the payoffs. This estimation is likely to determine the extent to which the policy agreement will be supported. An indicator of party support may be the voting results at the party congresses or special conferences which often are held at the end of government formation, though such votes may at the same time concern the composition of the government, which makes it more difficult to draw conclusions. The risk for party leaders thus is perhaps not so much that they are condemned for discussing specific policies instead of general ones, but rather that they are seen to have done it in the wrong way, by making too many concessions.

In the formation period, parties or party leaders are likely to focus their attention on

particular matters, rather than deal with the complete range of policies included in the parties' election programmes. One obvious reason for this is the time constraint, as government formation is aimed at producing a new government within a reasonably short time. In a country such as Israel, the maximum formation length is limited constitutionally to 119 days (this norm tells something of the difficulties of forming governments in this country). Another reason is that party leaders may only want to deal with a limited number of issues. In one concept of government formation mentioned above, each party leader is seen to select the policy principles that are central to his or her party. This is because the party rank and file expects the party leadership to behave in this way, and the latter will therefore use these policy principles to obtain enough credits within the party to be re-elected as party leader. Party leaders however may not just use policy as an instrument to secure their own continuity in office, and they also may not always tune their position to the 'Downsian centre' of party opinion. Party leaders may to an extent, be policy *users* but they may also be policy *seekers*. Indeed, parties such as the traditionally programme oriented Socialist parties may even not give their leadership much leeway in government formation. More than just a few policy principles may be expected to be raised during the negotiations.

A key question here is to what degree of specificity and how persistently viewpoints on policy are actually put forward during the formation talks, and what might be the consequences? In 1982, Browne & Dreijmanis envisaged negotiations as a process 'to apportion influence among the partners and establish an initial condition of programmatic unity among them' (349-350). If the stakes are general party principles, the *prima facie* result may be a deadlock in the negotiations, as party principles will often be partly or wholly incompatible. Such a result is not very likely, if only because then no coalition government would ever be formed. To avoid confrontations of this kind, party leaders may be careful about taking firm positions in the negotiations and instead choose to be pragmatic. This may enable parties to reach agreement without finding too many divergent views in their way. As a consequence, the agreement that is produced will contain some general and vague joint intentions rather than substantial policies, as these were simply not introduced at the negotiation table.

In contrast, if substantial interparty conflicts become manifest during government formation, this may indicate that policy is dealt with in a more rigorous manner, rather than that the parties are debating party principles in the abstract. Though we cannot exclude the possibility that there still is an element of bargaining posture, this becomes less likely when conflicts are more specific. Such conflicts do not only arise during the formation stage; they may also have emerged earlier, during the tenure of the previous government. Indeed, they may even have triggered the fall of the previous government. Further, in some countries at least, party leaders are often the most prominent, but not the only party spokespersons. Discussions on coalition policy may thus also involve party politicians who wish to deal with

matters more extensively.

Another reason why parties may want to deal seriously with certain policies and be prepared to bargain extensively on them is the existence of mistrust, which may increase as party competition becomes closer. Coalitions in multiparty systems are not a *marriage d'amour*.

For these different reasons, bargaining on policy during government formation may be more than a ritual. One possible indication that policy bargaining really means something is the occurrence of conflicts on policy. After all, bargaining in the actual sense of the word will always involve at least some degree of conflict.

COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND POLICY AGREEMENTS: AIMS OF THE STUDY

If we take manifest controversy on policy as the point of departure, a question that follows is to what extent such conflicts are resolved in the formation stage? Another question is how, if at all, this is reflected in a coalition agreement? In a coalition, the typical positive results of bargaining are compromises. Such compromises may be over one single issue, but they may also be more complex and take the form of a package deal including different issues in different areas.

If the results of bargaining are written down, it probably is not just due to convention but because verbal agreements are considered too weak to rely on, and this may be because parties mistrust each other. This does not mean however, that written agreements always contain substantive and specific compromises; there may be situations in which partial agreements on certain issues are deliberately left vague, so that none of the parties makes clear gains or losses. The latter may well be an indication that a particular policy conflict has not really been resolved. This may also be the situation if the agreement is procedural rather than substantial and is an agreement to disagree. Moreover, a manifestly controversial matter may not be mentioned in the coalition policy agreement at all. Bargaining on such issues may then be continued after the government is sworn in. Such bargaining may take place within the government or somewhere else in the coalition, or perhaps even partly outside the coalition, involving one or more external parties.

When agreements made on controversial issues during the formation stage are on the governmental agenda, different things may happen. They may be implemented directly or become the object of further bargaining between or within the coalition parties. If direct implementation requires that an agreement is sufficiently specific and clear cut, it is not automatically the case that such agreements are really implemented. This is something to be

assessed empirically and not simply assumed. The same goes for less specific, vague or even ambiguous agreements, which seem to be a potential source of conflict within the government. Thus, coalition policy agreements may have different kinds of effects on governmental decision making. It may be assumed that a certain type of policy agreement has a particular type of effect, but any theoretical argument on this matter remains sterile if it is not studied empirically. In their study of government formation and functioning, Budge & Keman have noted that policy agreements exist but are rarely reported (1990: 83-84).

Such an empirical investigation is the central aim of this study. The general point of departure is that coalition policy agreements link government formation to the life of the government. I first consider this link from a general and theoretical perspective. In this exercise several relevant, and mostly recent, studies are considered. Since however, most of the literature on coalition theory which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s ends about where the argument presented in this study begins, I will not deal with the 'first generations' of coalition research here. These have been discussed at length in the last ten years (see for example: Browne & Franklin, 1986; Budge & Laver, 1986; Laver & Schofield, 1990).

The character of negotiations on coalition policy agreements may differ as these negotiations take place in countries with different party systems and varying constitutional rules and other kinds of constraints on government formation. For this reason, I first consider the different contexts in which coalition agreements may or may not emerge. If such contexts are obviously systems in which coalition governments ensue, I go a little further and examine different types of multiparty systems. Another crucial question at the beginning of an investigation of coalition agreements is how interparty bargaining on policy during government formation can be envisaged. Following from this, another question concerns the general features of coalition policy agreements as the result of bargaining in the relevant countries. What is the average length of coalition agreements, how broad is their scope and how specific do they become? How much variation exists across and within countries? These points are considered in chapter two.

Though these questions are important, the aim of this study is more than to give a descriptive and content analytical account of coalition agreements in a number of countries. What is written down in coalition agreements will reflect directly the way in which parties perceive policy bargaining in government formation. What factors determine that such bargaining is seen as a serious affair or is instead conducted only for the sake of appearances? Here, the literature on coalition politics provides interesting and rather different viewpoints. These viewpoints may also be seen to underlie different functions of coalition agreements, first of all in the perception of the coalition parties. When parties engage in the formulation of a coalition agreement, they may do so for symbolic purposes or because they see government formation as an opportunity to make a substantive preparation for decision making when the

government is in office. The parties may not only intend to set part of the governmental agenda but also deal with politically sensitive matters to prevent conflict later on. This may mean that certain issues are removed rather than placed on the agenda. This function may be especially important if controversial issues are the main topics of negotiations over a coalition agreement.

A question that follows is whether coalition agreements formulated for substantive purposes also have a substantive and positive impact during the life of governments. One of the questions that will arise if the actual effects of coalition policy agreements are considered is how these agreements are enforced. This is an important aspect, as there is no neutral actor in the coalition game that can enforce the implementation or observation of the agreement. For this reason, enforcement of the agreement must be secured from within the coalition. The different views on agreements, their functions and effects, and the factors that may be relevant in the process of enforcement are dealt with in chapter three.

Apart from raising questions, discussing possibilities and formulating hypotheses on the functions and effects of coalition agreements, this study is also intended to give answers, even if these will be neither complete nor immediately generalisable. This empirical task will be the central point of concern in the chapters five through eight, which contain four case studies of coalitions in Belgium and the Netherlands, two from each country. Chapter four provides an introduction to the two countries and to the case studies taken from these countries. In the case studies, the focus will be on manifestly controversial issues, that is, issues on which serious conflict existed between two or more parties during government formation. A case study approach is chosen to examine empirical processes within a limited number of coalitions and place the findings in their relevant context, even if the emphasis is not always on this 'unique' context.

Finally, in chapter nine I consider the findings from the four case studies together. Here, I deal with the general patterns which emerge from the preceding chapters. What types of arrangements ensue where and in what policy fields? What is the general picture of success and failure of coalition governments? Is there a pattern to be found in the performance of the substantive functions of coalition agreements? Are there differences between cases, or perhaps between countries? If the outcome is failure, in what arena has this failure occurred? Further, what can be said about the different factors that are assumed to be favourable or unfavourable conditions for implementation? What factors may apply more in general, which have mainly a local relevance, and which are not relevant at all?

It will be clear that these are not simple questions. As said, this study is not intended to provide definitive answers. Rather, it is meant as a beginning to addressing these questions about internal processes within government coalitions in countries where policy issues are on the agenda when coalitions are formed.

2

Bargaining Systems, Coalition Governments, and Policy Agreements

COALITION GOVERNMENTS AND COALITION STUDIES

Most Western European countries, and an increasing number of countries outside Western Europe, have experienced coalition government in the last fifty years. Only two countries in Western Europe, Spain since 1977 and Britain since the second world war, have no record of coalition government in the strict sense, that is, with the government itself consisting of two or more political parties. In all other Western European countries, coalition governments have been in office for some or most of the time. In Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, and, through a constitutional provision, Switzerland, multiparty government has been the dominant form of government since 1945. The same applies to Israel, which since its foundation in 1948 has had coalition governments exclusively.

These coalitions however do not always have majority status; this is so even if minority governments are mostly *single party* governments. Coalition governments without a formal parliamentary majority depend on the active or passive support of one or more other parties in parliament. Sometimes, this is formalised in a support agreement, which is made during or shortly after government formation.

Coalition governments do not only emerge in minority situations; in Austria, Germany, Italy, Sweden and France after 1958, one party with an absolute majority has formed a coalition government with one or more other parties. With the exceptions of France (1968-1973 and 1981-1984) and Sweden (1951), however, the other three countries experienced this type of government only in the immediate post-war years.

It is therefore not surprising that the phenomenon of coalition government has received much theoretical attention in the last thirty years. Initially, this attention was focused on which set of possible coalitions was likely to form, rather than on what particular coalition *would* form. The underlying assumption was that parties as rational actors try to form party combinations that are minimal winning, as in this case an individual party would have to share least power with any other party. This 'minimal winning' was operationalised in various ways; it could

regard those combinations in which every party is *indispensible* to maintaining a parliamentary majority (Riker, 1962); it could mean the *absolutely* smallest parliamentary majority beyond the 50 percent mark (Gamson, 1961; Riker, 1962); or it could mean the minimal *number* of parties necessary for a parliamentary majority (Leiserson, 1968). Thus, in these approaches, the size of parties was the key variable.

These 'size based' approaches were found to be only modestly successful in accounting for coalitions emerging in the real world. One major criticism was that they ignored the element of ideology or policy. This criticism was constructive, as it led to more refined theories in which the element of ideology or 'policy' was present. The central characteristic of these approaches was that they identified the parties' ideological positions, often on one 'policy dimension', the left-right scale. For one theory, the assumption was that coalitions will contain parties that are 'connected' on the dimension (Axelrod, 1970). For another, the predicted set of coalitions consisted of party combinations in which parties were not only each other's closest ideological neighbours, but also together had a 'minimal ideological range' (De Swaan, 1973). In both approaches size aspects remained important. In Axelrod's theory, for example, the predicted coalitions were *minimal* connected winning. These theories were more specific, and indeed they had more empirical relevance.

Theories of government stability or duration were also developed alongside these theories of government coalition formation. These were oriented primarily on party system features or on size or ideology related 'attributes' of governments. Coalitions of minimal size and minimal ideological heterogeneity were thought to be the most durable (Dodd, 1976; Sanders & Herman, 1977; Warwick, 1979). Thus, two different phenomena, government formation and government duration, were accounted for by essentially the same factors.

In the 1980s, these theories in turn came to be criticised. To many authors, the problem was perhaps not so much the empirical performance (predictive success) of the existing theories, but rather their 'formal' and 'static' character. A common point of criticism was that coalition formation was too strongly depicted as being a game played at *one* fixed point in time, and the end as something that just happened, without it being clear why on Friday 13th and not any other point in time. Giving more attention to the *dynamic* character of coalition politics was seen to be necessary; a government not only is formed and dissolved, but also has a 'life' in between. A second line of criticism was that the underlying assumption of parties as 'office seekers' left the construction of minority governments and more than minimal winning governments unexplained. Office seeking in these theories implied a reluctance to be office *sharing*, hence surplus majority coalitions, or more suggestively, 'oversized coalitions', were not expected. Though the growing attention being paid to policy did not immediately mean that parties came to be seen as being interested *exclusively* in policy, this development was nonetheless important. The concept of policy came to be used less in the abstract and more in relation to issues on which parties profile themselves. Finally, the unitary actor status of parties, an assumption present implicitly in the 'classical' theories

of coalition building, increasingly was called into question. Parties came to be seen as arenas of competition also on policy, with often delicate relationships existing between party leaders and party followers. These points have been discussed at length and in detail by many authors, and with different emphases (see, for example: Browne & Franklin, 1986; Budge & Laver, 1986; Laver & Schofield, 1990; Luebbert, 1983, 1986; and Strom, 1984, 1990).

This chapter builds on a number of important results of coalition research, which concern both theory oriented and empirical studies. It consists of three sections. In the first section, the bargaining system perspective is introduced as it sets the scene for an analysis of bargaining on and in coalition governments. I consider government formation and duration in different types of bargaining systems briefly. In the second section, I focus on policy bargaining in what is called the 'multidimensional policy space', as this is the aspect of coalition politics which is most central in this study. The perspective in section two is mostly theoretical, while section three contains a general empirical assessment of the occurrence and profiles of coalition agreements in different types of bargaining systems.

BARGAINING SYSTEMS AND COALITION GOVERNMENTS

Coalition bargaining takes place within a bargaining system. Such a system is relevant to the way in which coalition governments are formed, maintained, and end and to the way in which the three are related. Basically, by speaking of a 'bargaining system' I mean the relevant parties in a particular country and the way in which these are interrelated. A party is considered 'relevant' if it has (coalition) government potential.

Each relevant party takes a particular position on one or more 'policy dimensions', a policy dimension being essentially a set of theoretically possible policy preferences. Basically, a policy dimension represents a cleavage, which can be socio-economic, religious, ethno-linguistic, or some other. These cleavages constitute the historical basis of parties, and new schisms may lead to party realignments or new parties. In the present context, it is important to appreciate that cleavages do not only have an effect on the party system in a structural sense, in terms of its size and form, they may also have an effect on bargaining relationships within the system. Among other things, these bargaining relationships depend on the position that parties take on the relevant policy dimension, or within the policy space if there are more relevant dimensions. Such positions of course are not 'fixed'; rather, parties as it were move in different directions within the policy space.

Laver & Schofield distinguish three types of bargaining systems borrowed from international relations literature: unipolar, bipolar and multipolar systems (1990: 110-137).

Another important concept is the median party. If a party takes the *median position* on a relevant policy dimension (and parties take an interest in policy), no viable majority can be formed without the party holding that position. The median party is thus in a strategic position when issues relating to the relevant dimension are on the agenda, and this position may even be very strong if there is only one relevant policy dimension.

Unipolar systems contain one large party and a number of (much) smaller parties. This situation exists in Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and existed in Denmark until 1971 (after this year, new parties greatly reduced the hegemony of the Social Democrats).¹ Israel until the mid-1970s could also be classified as a unipolar system, in which the Labour party was the largest party amidst three or so smaller and several very small but still relevant parties. In 1977, when several electoral realignments took place and drastic shifts in parliamentary strength occurred, Israel transformed into a multipolar system, which might rather be called 'fragmented' (Schofield, 1993: 2).

Laver & Schofield further distinguish between unipolar systems in which the large party is in the median position on one or more dimensions, as is the situation in Ireland, and 'off centre systems', in which the large party is not in the median position (1990: 114-116). In this last type of system, which exists in Scandinavia, we find alternations of single party governments formed by the large party (Social Democrats or Socialists) and coalitions containing the 'bourgeois' parties. Though coalition governments emerge from both types of unipolar systems, they are not typical coalition systems.

Bipolar systems are characterised by the presence of two parties of more or less equal size and a third and possibly a fourth much smaller one. In Germany and Austria, the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU in Germany) or Conservatives (the ÖVP in Austria) form one 'pole', and the Social Democrats (SPD and SPÖ respectively) the other. In Germany, the third party is a Liberal party (FDP), and in Austria, it is the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ).² In these 'two and a half' party systems, two party governments (minimal winning coalitions) are most frequent, though in Austria the Socialists have also been in office alone when they obtained a parliamentary majority (and for this reason it is not a typical coalition system).

In multipolar bargaining systems, size differences between the relevant parties are relatively limited. The largest party usually obtains no more than about one third of the seats,

¹ The authors also mention Luxemburg, but this country is not an unambiguous unipolar system, because the parties are fairly equal in size. To call this country unipolar because the Christian Socials have always been present in the government is confusing, as this is also the situation with the Christian Democrats in Belgium (except for the period 1954-58) and the Netherlands until October 1994. There may also be doubt about the unipolar status of Iceland, given the presence of four 'relevant' (coalitionable) parties. In fact, in a later article, Schofield (1993) places Iceland within the multipolar category.

² In Germany, the Greens passed the electoral threshold of 5 percent in 1983, and have been represented in the *Bundestag* since then.

and absolute majorities reached by one party are rare. As a consequence, bargaining relationships may become complex, even if all kinds of constraints usually limit the number of viable coalitions. In unipolar or bipolar systems only real electoral shocks (or major party realignments) can cause 'disruptions', whereas in multipolar systems bargaining relationships may be affected even by small changes in party size or shifts in the policy space. As Laver & Schofield argue, even awareness of the possible effects of elections may

make parties sensitive to anticipated election results and to detailed changes in policy positions and thereby create continual incentives to renegotiate coalitions, making all coalitions less stable (1990: 158).

Such incentives may exist not only in or before elections; coalition changes may also occur without parliamentary elections, a *fliegende Wechsel*, as the jargon has it. Examples of multipolar systems (sometimes more accurately called fragmented) are Denmark after 1971, Italy, Iceland, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Israel since 1977.

The term 'multipolar' however may be somewhat misleading if we consider the empirical processes of coalition politics, especially the forming of governments, in countries such as Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands. Typically, in these three countries, the Christian Democrats have long been, in Orwell's famous phrase, 'more equal than others'. The way in which this has become clear is the (semi)permanence in office of the CVP-PSC in Belgium, the DC in Italy and the CDA in the Netherlands until 1994. This in itself is consistent with the bargaining systems approach in that these parties were in a central position in the policy space, if not necessarily for all the relevant dimensions at the same time. It is however precisely the centrality of the Christian Democrats that seems to contradict the representation of the system in these countries as being *multi-polar*. In the present context, therefore, the term 'multipolar' is used to distinguish the aforementioned countries from other system types in a numerical sense, referring to the number and size of the relevant parties. The actual bargaining power of parties in 'multipolar' systems may be more unequal than the limited size differences suggest. This in turn must be seen in relation to the positions of parties on the relevant policy dimension(s), a point which will receive more attention later in this chapter.³

³ After the elections of May 1994, the Netherlands became more truly a multipolar system. The CDA suffered the largest electoral loss since the introduction of proportional representation in the Netherlands in 1917.

The impact of the bargaining system on the formation and duration of governments

Government formation

In multipolar systems, bargaining relationships generally are more complex than in unipolar and bipolar systems. This difference is likely to become manifest first of all in the way in which governments are formed. Typically, in multipolar systems, government formation takes more time than in unipolar and bipolar systems, and new governments often emerge only after several bargaining attempts.

Laver & Schofield assert that the number of failed formation attempts is an indication of the number of viable alternatives given bargaining relationships between the relevant parties (1990: 162). This variable was introduced by Strøm, who defines a formation attempt in terms of the (different) parties involved and in terms of (different) *formateurs* or *informateurs* accepting an instruction to form a coalition (1984: 224).

Both Strøm's definition and the assumption of Laver & Schofield however involve some ambiguity. The problem with Strøm's definition is that attempts at formation that are not followed directly by the installation of a new government need not be 'failed' attempts. For example, if an *informateur* passes his or her instruction on to a *formateur*, this in itself is not a failure, but may simply be a necessary step in the process of government formation, the *formateur* being the prospective prime minister who conducts the allocation of cabinet portfolios. Things would be different if a *formateur returns* the instruction and a new *informateur* is appointed, as this mostly means a deadlock in the negotiations. With regard to failed attempts as a measure of viable alternatives, we should realise that parties may also make attempts which are *meant*, if not by all, to fail, for example to play off other parties against each other or to remove a particular party from the formation table. Certain political conventions may also play a part in this respect. In the Netherlands, for example, the biggest party or the party gaining most seats may receive an instruction to form a government, even if it is unlikely that it can motivate the other parties to join it in a coalition.

Instances of 'multiple' formation attempts are essentially parts of a selection process, but not necessarily in the sense that with every additional attempt the ensuing government becomes less preferred. Often the reverse is true. The government formation process in such instances starts with individual parties or 'proto-coalitions', which first realign before the relevant criteria in the formation are met. These criteria may relate to the bargaining system, but also to other factors, such as different kinds of constraints. In this process, proto-coalitions may fall apart, but they may also be extended to a parliamentary basis which is much broader than a simple majority. This has occurred in Belgium, Finland, Israel and the Netherlands.

Unless it takes place in a completely predictable manner, this selection process adds to the complexity of government formation in multipolar systems when compared to the other system types. In multipolar systems, it is quite common to have three formation attempts, and sometimes up to eight, as has been the case in Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands. In

Italy, Israel and Denmark since 1971 this is more rare, but we should realise that in Italy and Israel the forming of new governments often involves a *fliegende Wechsel*, in which one party leaves or joins the government without elections taking place.⁴

Government types

In unipolar systems (with the exception of Israel), the result of government formation is usually a single party government, a coalition of the minimal winning type or a coalition with minority status. Single party and coalition governments often alternate. In bipolar systems, this last type of coalitions is the predominant form of government. In an examination of empirical patterns of governments, Laver & Schofield found that in both systems, except in Ireland, government coalitions are mostly connected on the left right dimension. These findings are presented in table 2.1.⁵

This contrasts with the situation in multipolar systems, in which more different types of governments occur, with coalitions often being *unconnected* on the left right dimension. As table 2.1 illustrates, minimal winning coalitions that are not minimal connected winning (MW not MCW) are more frequent in multipolar systems than elsewhere. Further, coalitions which are surplus majorities but not minimal connected winning (surplus majority not MCW) are mostly not connected on the left right dimension in Belgium, Finland, Israel and Italy. This indicates that at least one other policy dimension must be relevant during the process of government building in these systems. Moreover, countries such as Belgium, Finland and the Netherlands show considerable variation in the party composition of governments, notwithstanding the continuity in office of the Christian Democrats in Belgium and the Netherlands. Finland stands out as a country with the highest 'turnover' of parties in office: between 1945 and 1992, there were as many as 22 differently composed governments.⁶

Government duration

The greater pain it takes to build coalition governments in multipolar systems tends not to

⁴ In Israel, no less than five different governments were formed between March 1990 and January 1992. In a way, these short lived governments themselves were formation attempts. This places the small average number of formation attempts in this country since 1977 in a different light.

⁵ Following the terminology introduced by Axelrod and referred to at the beginning of this chapter, a coalition is minimal connected winning but not minimal winning (MCW not MW) (or in other words a surplus majority) if the smaller and 'surplus' parties are in its policy centre, with the bigger parties taking the flank positions. If a government is a surplus majority coalition but not minimal connected winning, this may mean that it is not connected on the left right dimension, but it also may be not *minimal* connected winning. Such a coalition thus consists of adjacent parties, with the smaller (and surplus) party or parties being on one or both flanks.

⁶ This calculation is based on Strøm (1990: 251-252). In part, this high number of party configurations is due to party realignments.

result in a longer life for governments in these systems. Laver and Schofield have put it this way:

(...) coalition members in (multipolar) systems are far more likely to find themselves, once they have taken office, in a situation in which they suddenly develop incentives to unscramble the deal that forms the fundamental basis of the coalition (1990: 160).

The average duration of governments mentioned in table 2.1 also points in this direction; governments in unipolar and bipolar bargaining systems often last longer than governments in multipolar systems, including caretaker governments.⁷ Indeed, in Belgium, Finland, Israel and Italy, almost any type of government ends earlier than governments in countries such as Norway, Sweden, Austria and Germany.⁸ Both in Denmark and Israel, the average duration decreased when the bargaining system became less stable, though this decrease was limited. In Israel, governments have always been brief. Contrary to what is often assumed, however, government duration is barely reduced as the number of formation attempts goes up. This underlines that governments made after several attempts are not necessarily 'pathological' cases, at least not if we use duration as an indicator.

The policy aspect enters the picture when considering the reasons why governments end. In unipolar and bipolar systems fixed elections are the primary reason for the dissolution of governments. In multipolar systems however (at least in most countries), dissolution is due to internal conflict within the coalition, especially within the government (Nousiainen, 1993: 272). Anticipated elections and parliamentary conflict are also significant in multipolar systems. Anticipated elections may involve calculations made by one government party rather than confrontations between parties, and parliamentary conflict may involve external parties lining up against government parties, sometimes joined by part of the coalition itself. These two additional causes of government termination are important precisely in the countries where governmental dissension is less frequent, Denmark and Iceland.⁹ Thus, in multipolar systems coalition governments end because of pull factors (electoral prospects, viable coalition alternatives) and push factors (internal conflicts).

⁷ Here, we should note that the constitutional term of governments is not the same everywhere; it varies from 3 years in Sweden to 5 years in Italy and Ireland, while in most countries it is 4 years.

⁸ This can be inferred from the information provided by Laver & Schofield (1990: 152).

⁹ This is inferred from information provided by Budge & Kernan (1990: 160-161).

Table 2.1
Governments in three types of bargaining systems 1945-1992
(absolute figures)

	single-party	minority coalition	MW and MCW	MCW not MW	MW not MCW	surplus majority not MCW	average number formation attempts	average government duration in months
unipolar systems								
Norway	16	4	3				1.2	25
Sweden	17	2	4			1	1.2	27
Ireland	11	3		4			1.2	30
Denmark <1971	7	4	2		1	14	2.3	22
Israel <1977				6	2	15	1.7	14
<i>percentage of total</i>	51	13	9	6	7		<i>average 1.5</i>	23
bipolar systems								
Austria	6		10		2	1	n.a.	28
Germany			12		1	3	n.a.	30
<i>percentage of total</i>	17		63		9	11	<i>average</i>	29
multipolar systems								
Denmark > 1971	7	6					2.0	19
Israel > 1977		4			2	8	1.1	13
Iceland	4		5		10	3	1.6	25
Italy	16	4	2	10	7	14	2.0	10
Finland	4	7	4		1	18	2.0	12
Belgium	5	2	8		13	6	2.6	16
Netherlands		3	6		2	7	3.1	25
<i>percentage of total</i>	19	13	13	6	18	29	<i>average 2.1</i>	17

MW = minimal winning MCW = minimal connected winning
 * Governments in office until after 1992 were excluded.

Sources: Laver & Schofield (1990: 100); Strom (1990a: 246-269).
 Information updated to January 1992 (on the basis of Keesings Contemporary Archives).

BARGAINING ON COALITION POLICY

One of the interesting things about the bargaining systems approach for the study of coalition politics is that it provides a context in which we may see both the players and the things of interest to these players, of which policy is of special importance. In this section, I focus on policy, or more specifically on policy bargaining between parties that attempt to form a government together. The unidimensional perspective mentioned in the previous section is a rudimentary way to envisage the relative policy preferences of parties and make predictions about the composition of governments, provided that parties take an interest in policy, and about the policy profile of coalitions. The empirical patterns of governments depicted in such terms however, suggest strongly that the one dimensional perspective lacks a certain amount of realism, especially in multipolar systems, where nearly half the number of governments (and more if we consider only coalitions) is not connected on the left right dimension. It was stated earlier that the origin of a party is often a particular societal cleavage, and precisely in multipolar systems the main parties are rooted in different cleavages. These cleavages are not necessarily traditional but may also be more recent. In the following paragraphs, I will speak of policy dimensions as abstractions of the different policy preferences that parties may have relative to each other. Although I consider bargaining relationships from a general, theoretical perspective, the discussion is of special relevance to multipolar systems.

Bargaining on coalition policy in a multidimensional policy space

We can obtain a model of the relative positions of parties in a bargaining system at a particular point in time by locating the policy positions of parties in a policy space. These relative positions may be expressed in terms of *distances*. Spatial approaches to government formation are usually confined to two dimensions, as it is difficult to make graphical representations of truly multidimensional policy spaces.¹⁰ Another concept is the *core* position in the policy space, which is the multidimensional variant of the median position (the party which is in the median position on the relevant dimensions is the core party). While there is always a median party, there is not always a core party in a multidimensional bargaining system. The reason for this is that only a large party can be in the median position on all relevant dimensions at one and the same time, and even if this is the case, small shifts in the policy space by other parties may be sufficient to remove it from the median position (see

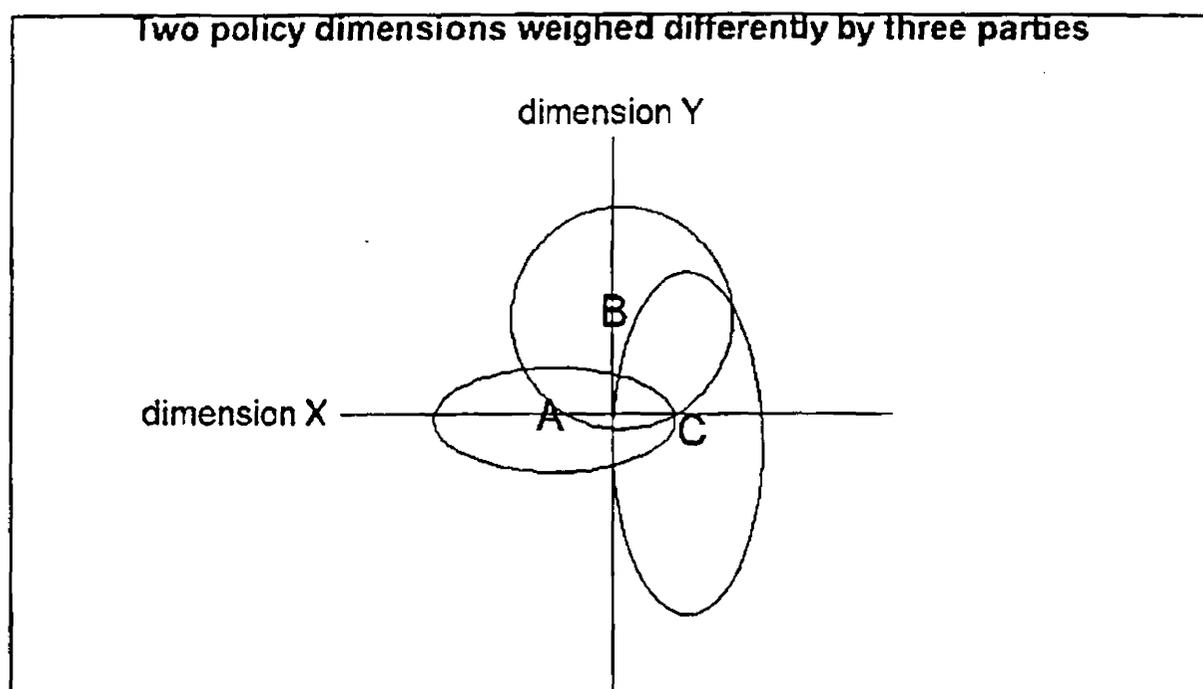
¹⁰ There are also nonspatial approaches to coalition politics, of which the *saliency theory* probably is the most distinct and important one. In this approach, it is not the positions of parties on policy dimensions that are compared, but the relative emphasis that parties give to particular subjects in their election manifestos, which is measured in terms of the percentage of text spent on these subjects. This approach is discussed further below.

Laver & Budge, 1992 and Laver & Hunt, 1992, for a discussion of spatial theories of government formation).

The salience of policy dimensions

From a purely theoretical point of view, this representation of party relationships may be logical and clear. In reality, however, not every dimension may be given the same weight by the relevant parties. If one dimension is really generally salient, another may be more salient to one party than to a second party. The 'distance' between two parties on this last dimension may be very different in the perception of each of these parties. Party A may feel that party B is not too far away, while B may perceive the gap between A as unbridgeable in the next government formation. Such differences may also occur in a multidimensional context with more parties. This is illustrated in figure 2.1, which is based on an example given by Laver & Hunt (1992: 79).

Figure 2.1



The shape of the figure (circles or ellipses) indicates the relative salience of the dimensions, and their size (surface) indicates each party's bargaining flexibility. The larger the circle or ellipse, the more a party will be prepared to compromise, but never beyond a certain point. In this example, the willingness of parties to make concessions away from their 'ideal' policy position (the points A, B and C) is always a matter of concessions on dimension X relative to concessions, or gains, on dimension Y.

From the perspective of party A, C's position is just within the range of what A considers acceptable for making a deal or compromise on the horizontal dimension; however, C will be much less prepared to bargain with A on this dimension. At the same time, the two parties are 'closer' on the other dimension, something which is far more important to A than to C. In this situation, a package deal may be made in which A accepts a policy represented by a point close to C on dimension X, while C in return accepts a policy on dimension Y that is closer to A than to C. All kinds of variations are possible here, and party B may also be involved.

Interestingly, in a different, non-spatial, approach, Gregory Luebbert has developed a very similar argument with respect to government formation. According to this author, there is a *limit of tolerance* in government formation:

The hypothesized limit (of tolerance) applies to the least favorable relationship that exists between the two parties within their entire set of relevant preferences. If the parties have convergent preferences on one issue and divergent (...) preferences on another, the bargaining relationship is divergent (...). The formateurs (of one party) will always be willing to proceed to the limit of tolerance, but not beyond it. The government that emerges is, in this view, a by-product of the prevailing constellation of bargaining relationships and the systematically determined consequences that the formateurs find attached to different levels of tolerance (1986: 65).

Several ways have been found to determine the salience of policy dimensions. Laver & Hunt (1992) have conducted a large scale expert survey in different countries. Before this, survey based research did not differentiate so clearly between parties, the results mostly being a picture of the 'generally salient' dimensions in systems at large. The approach followed by Laver & Hunt has the advantage of providing a more differentiated picture of the policy space in a particular system, but there is a problem in that the picture becomes more difficult to draw the further into the past you go.

A different route has been followed by the Manifesto Research Group. In an extensive comparative content analysis of party programmes and published government declarations, country specialists have estimated percentages of party manifestos spent on particular issue dimensions. These 'dimensions' were specified in advance. Actually, they were not really dimensions in the usual more or less abstract sense, but instead were distinct policy themes or 'domains'. On the basis of specific coding categories (these were variables representing related policy statements in the documents), twenty different policy domains were distinguished, regarding all areas of government activity. The percentages of text in manifestos or government declarations spent on these domains were seen as indicating the salience of these domains, either to individual parties or to governments (Budge, Robertson & Hearl, 1987; Laver & Budge, 1992). This approach however seems to be more useful to studying party manifestos than government policy documents, as in the latter case very

important but controversial matters may be dealt with in just a few lines and conversely many words may be spent on subjects which are not the ones on which parties have profiled themselves, and which are of no real interest.

These general approaches are not only different in the way the salience of policy dimensions is estimated; they also differ on a more fundamental point, which is the question of what actually constitutes a policy dimension. As said before, a policy dimension is usually seen to represent a cleavage line within society. In many parliamentary democracies, traditional cleavages have stimulated the formation of political parties and subsequently party splits. Contrary to the manifesto project (in which dimensions were actually policy domains), the more deductive approaches towards interparty relationships typically are based on such general conceptions of policy dimensions. Yet these conceptions often differ. As Laver & Hunt put it: 'in an important sense, there are at least as many policy spaces as there are people interested in politics' (1992: 67). The concept of multidimensionality does not have one meaning, and the point to be emphasised here is that when speaking of policy dimensions X and Y, it should be made clear what exactly is meant by dimension X and what by dimension Y. This is especially important if we realise that in reality parties may not negotiate over abstract notions but on concrete policy issues.

Types of bargaining relationships

Policy dimensions, or domains or issues, may thus be generally relevant or irrelevant, or be important to one party but less important to another. Luebbert calls this last category *tangential* (1986: 62-63). Tangential issues, that is, issues which belong to dimensions that are tangential to two parties, may be dealt with in what is usually referred to as a process of 'logrolling'. Party A may accept B's preference for, for example an increase in defence spending if B accepts A's preference for lower penalties for the use of soft drugs. With regard to the other possibilities, there may be either a complete 'silence' or direct confrontation in coalition bargaining. The views of parties on generally relevant matters may be more or less compatible, or, in the terminology of Luebbert, convergent or divergent. If parties have divergent preferences (Luebbert speaks of divergent bargaining relationships), arrangements made between parties may be either explicit or implicit compromises (ibid). Explicit compromises contain unilateral or mutual and substantive concessions. Implicit compromises are agreements to disagree, and these may take the form of procedural arrangements such as postponements or statements which are sufficiently general or vague so that no party will feel that its preferences are violated. Thus, explicit compromises commit the coalition parties to particular substantive policies, whereas implicit compromises contain commitments to certain procedures to be followed on the issue in question, or contain only vague and weak commitments.

The reasons why parties formulate either an explicit or an implicit compromise may vary. This may have to do with the nature, or definition, of issues, which may involve more

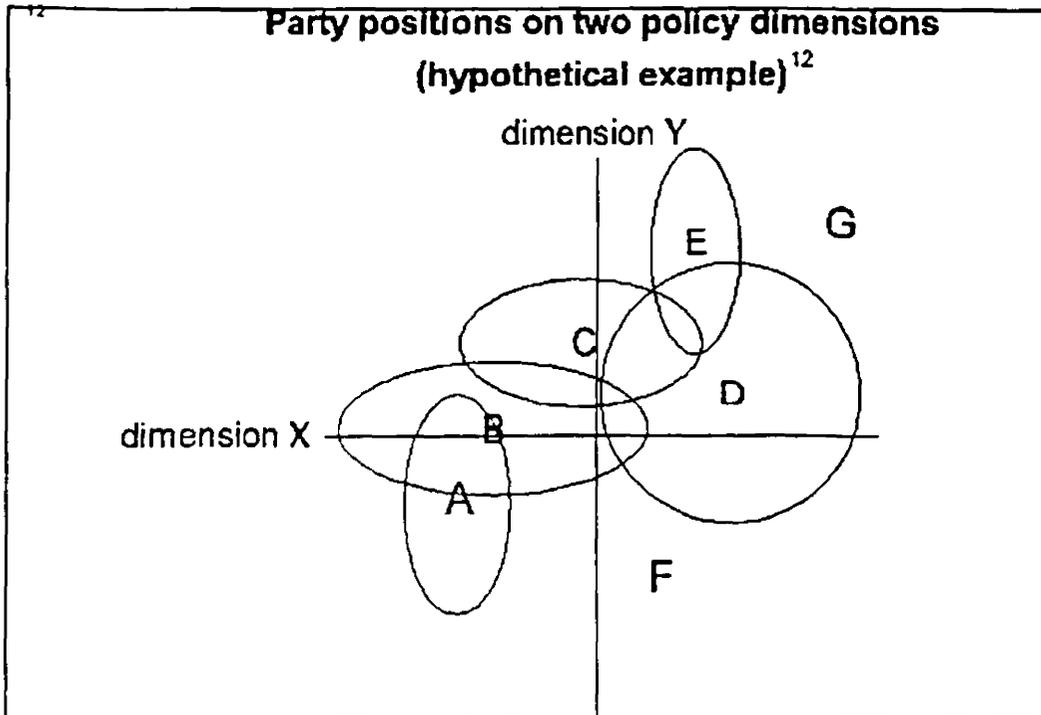
or less compromisable viewpoints. If issues have a high ideological content, preferences may be incompatible, and substantive explicit compromises difficult to reach. Strategic considerations may also come into play, such as the commitment that a particular party seeks to prevent *ad hoc* legislative coalitions being formed with noncoalition parties. If such external threats exist, one or more prospective coalition parties may press for an explicit compromise to commit all coalition parties.

One reason why parties may be reluctant to make clear commitments is the existence of internal divisions within parties. General or vague arrangements may be seen to prevent an increase in intraparty divisions. Of course, parties facing such internal threats must first be able to convince the other parties that, on the issues in question, implicit compromises are to be preferred to explicit ones. When other parties press for more clear cut arrangements, internally divided parties are in an awkward position.

These points can also be illustrated graphically. Consider figure 2.2, which represents a somewhat more complex (but also more realistic) situation than suggested in figure 2.1. Suppose, that the parties B, C and D conduct negotiations to form a new government. Given the numbers of parliamentary seats of the parties, a coalition BCD would include the median parties on the X and Y dimension, which are party C (on X) and D (on Y).¹¹ In this specific bargaining situation, distances between the positions of B, C and D are such, that the parties are likely to pay attention to both dimensions. This is because the smallest distances exist with respect to the most generally salient dimension (Y), while party positions with respect to the less important dimension X also are more remote. In the example, this can be seen in the small overlap in the parties' respective areas of tolerance. In this example, no convergent preferences exist between parties on either dimension (in graphical terms this would require that the 'ideal' policy points of two or more parties on one dimension form an imaginary straight line that runs square to the dimension). Presumably, the less overlap in the areas of tolerance of parties, the less these parties will agree explicitly on issues. If there is no overlap at all, parties are unlikely to coalesce, but if, for reasons other than policy considerations alone, parties nonetheless conduct coalition negotiations, they may agree to disagree and formulate implicit compromises.

¹¹ In this example there are 100 parliamentary seats. The median party can be calculated by counting from either side of the dimension until the median legislator is found, which in this case is the 50th seat (notice that this need not be at the midpoint of the dimension, as this depends entirely on the positions of the parties). On dimension X, party A has 12 seats, B has 20 seats, and C 28, so that C controls the median legislator ($12+20=32$, so that the median legislator is the 18th seat of party C counted from left to right). To determine the median party on dimension Y, a similar procedure is followed counting from E downwards or upwards from F. Unless parliament consists entirely of unaffiliated individual MP's, the concept of the median legislator does not mean that a single MP can be a policy dictator!

Figure 2.2



The situation would be different if C for example started to give more weight to dimension X than to Y, and D changed its position on dimension Y in the direction of the 'ideal point' of party B. In this case, dimension X would become more 'tangential', and bargaining become less of a confrontation between B and C. Party B would then be more prepared to give way on X, and party C on Y. Moreover, the policy positions of parties B and D on dimension Y would have become convergent. Bargaining in the new situation would be likely to take place bilaterally between B and D and between C and D.

Internal and external parties

The picture could still be made more realistic by not only taking into account the positions of prospective coalition parties, but also those of other relevant parties in the system. As a matter of fact, it would be rather exceptional if parties conducting coalition negotiations perceive themselves as always (that is, on all dimensions or issues) closer to each other than to any other relevant party in the system.

Consider for example party A in figure 2.2 above. Coalition BCD is still the point of departure. On dimension X, party A is much closer to party B, in this last party's perception, than any of B's partners at the bargaining table. Further, in the perception of party D, an *ad*

¹² Seat distribution: party A 12, B 20, C 28, D 20, E 10, and F and G, which are not relevant parties, both 5 (total number of seats = 100).

hoc legislative coalition ABC on issues relating to dimension X could be a serious threat if the new government BCD takes office. What also becomes visible in the figure is that party A would have little chance of being included in a *government* coalition with B and C or with B and D, as it is located well outside the compromise area of both C and D. In short, the threat of *ad hoc* legislative coalitions with external parties may form an incentive for at least one of the prospective coalition parties to demand that firm commitments be made during government formation.¹³

The situation in government formation in the Netherlands in 1977 can be used as an empirical example. In that formation, the CDA and VVD had divergent positions on the abortion issue, which was salient to both. A compromise on the substance of the issue was out of reach. Instead, the CDA, the *formateur's* party, came up with a procedural agreement, in which it was stated that the cabinet would try to submit a bill before 1 January 1979, and otherwise await a parliamentary initiative. In this way, the CDA committed the VVD to inaction and thus kept the party from forming a legislative majority on the issue with the PvdA and D66, the other relevant secular parties. Interestingly, this implicit compromise was reached initially between CDA, PvdA and D66 in an earlier failed formation attempt. The CDA had pressed for such an agreement for the same reason: the threat of a legislative coalition of the PvdA and D66 with the VVD.

The model presented above could of course be extended or modified in different ways, but the main points should have become clear by now. In a bargaining system in which different policy dimensions are relevant, the agenda during government formation may vary according to the parties which participate and the relative weights these parties give to different policy dimensions. Depending on the constellation of bargaining relationships, bargaining itself may be more or less difficult. Still assuming that parties care about policy during government formation, it seems reasonable to assume further that policy divergences especially are important when parties must decide whether or not they will join in a coalition. In election campaigns, the matters that parties use for profiling themselves will surely not all be the same, and this creates room to make deals on 'tangential' issues. Yet, when considering the possibility of governing together, parties may pay attention explicitly or more implicitly to points of conflict. Since in multipolar bargaining systems there are many dimensions of party competition, such conflicts may also be frequent in coalition bargaining. This means that the scope of policy bargaining is likely to be broad, something which in turn will have an effect on the contents of coalition agreements.

¹³ The same logic, in reverse, applies in situations in which minority governments seek external support. In these situations, the absence of 'close' external parties on particular dimensions may be a threat to the coalition, in that it may not receive parliamentary support.

COALITION POLICY AGREEMENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE

What is meant by a coalition policy agreement?

If policy and policy dimensions are concepts which can mean different things to different people, we must at least be clear about what we understand by coalition policy agreements. Both in theory and in practice, there is talk of party programmes or election manifestos, government programmes, government declarations, support agreements, and coalition agreements. What these programmes have in common is that they concern policy and exist in written form. Apart from the obvious difference between party programmes and programmes agreed on by two or more parties, differences between types of joint programmes can also be important.

A coalition agreement is an agreement made by two or more parties during government formation, not only before the government is sworn in, but also during the sequence of government formation, before the distribution of portfolios. There are many ways in which the process of coalition agreement formulation can be organised and the results may also differ, but the points just mentioned are distinctive when comparing coalition agreements with government programmes and government declarations. These last two types of documents are made officially by the new government, and may, to a greater or smaller extent, contain policies formulated by ministers themselves. They may be a re-edited version of the coalition agreement, as such containing no new substantive intentions. Government declarations are presented officially in parliament, read out by the prime minister. In countries such as Belgium and Israel this is part of a formal investiture.¹⁴

Thus, coalition agreements are made typically *for* the new government, while government programmes and declarations are made *by* the new government. The latter may be largely a formality if coalition parties have drafted a coalition agreement. On the other hand, programmes or declarations may be the only programmatic basis of the government.

Support agreements and coalition agreements

Coalition agreements also differ from support agreements. The key distinctive element here is that support agreements are made between prospective government parties, not necessarily a coalition, and parties which remain outside the government. Support agreements are different from legislative coalitions formed on an *ad hoc* basis, in that the former are made before a government takes office, and are written down. As Kaare Strøm has pointed out, support agreements are pursued primarily by minority governments to secure a fairly stable kind of external support, but majority governments may also do this (1990: 61-66, 96-127).

¹⁴ Declarations also emerge in noncoalition systems such as those of Britain, Canada, and New Zealand, where they are usually based on the election manifesto of the party that takes office.

Countries in which the former situation exists are Ireland and Denmark. Support agreements between majority governments and external parties have occurred in Israel and Italy. In Norway and Sweden, support agreements have been used by the Social Democrats to split the opposition when forming a single party minority government (Särilvik, 1983: 145). Support agreements usually contain a limited number of matters on which commitments are made, but they may also be single-issue agreements with different parties.

Support agreements are made with external parties because these are needed to give the government a parliamentary majority on particular issues, while coalition policy agreements are made exclusively between parties that will participate in the new government. External parties may play an indirect role here, by forcing individual coalition parties to insist on firm commitments with their prospective partners, to reduce the threat of *ad hoc* legislative coalitions with such external parties.

The occurrence of coalition agreements in different types of bargaining systems

Unipolar systems

As we have seen, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark until 1971 are systems in which single party governments are more frequent than coalitions, and the coalitions often have minority status. Only in Israel until 1977 were majority coalitions the rule. In Norway and Sweden, coalition agreements have emerged since the formation of 'bourgeois' coalitions in the 1960s (Norway) and 1970s (Sweden). In Sweden, the coalitions of Social Democrats and the Agrarian party in the 1950s had a coalition agreement that committed the parties in particular in the area of socio-economic policy. Sometimes, coalition agreements are made before the parliamentary elections. In Denmark, coalition agreements have been elaborated by majority coalitions, and by minority coalitions that had formal support agreements with external parties (Thomas, 1982: 124; Strom, 1990: 95). Coalition bargaining in these countries is usually between the party leaders, with the parliamentary groups generally being consulted at the end of the negotiations. Sometimes, parliamentary area specialists are involved (Pesonen and Thomas, 1983: 79, 91-92; Särilvik, 1983: 126-127; KHA, 1983-1992).

In Ireland, changes of governments have for a long time been alternations of single party and coalition governments. Though coalitions emerged earlier, a real coalition agreement was first issued in 1973, when Fine Gael and Labour took office together. In fact, as happens sometimes in Scandinavia, the agreement was drafted before the parliamentary elections (Cohan, 1982: 272). After 1981, however, actual policy negotiations were started only after the elections (one possible reason for this is that pre-electoral pacts made between Fine Gael and Labour were followed by electoral defeats). By and large, Ireland seems to be a country in which party leaders conduct policy negotiations primarily to satisfy their respective rank and files, while electoral considerations may also play a part (Laver & Higgins, 1986: 173-177).

In Israel, new governments have been required by constitution to present a policy programme since 1968. The formulation of coalition agreements, however, is not something that depends on constitutional provisions only. In fact, coalition agreements have been drawn up since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 (Peretz, 1979: 158; Arian, 1985: 163). Until 1977, these agreements were typically produced in two stages: first, Labour, as the formateur's party, presented a document containing policy priorities, that is, the party's central demands, for the next legislative term. Next, negotiations with potential coalition partners were started, leading to both the government and the definitive coalition agreement (Seliktar, 1982: 303).

Thus, in unipolar systems, coalition government formation often implies the formulation of a coalition policy agreement, especially if the coalition parties control a parliamentary majority. With Israel forming an exception, negotiations on these agreements are usually fairly brief. We will see below that this is also reflected in the contents of coalition agreements.

Bipolar systems

In both Austria and Germany, coalition agreements have been drafted since the early postwar years. In Austria, these documents have been published officially in the government gazette since 1956 (Dreijmanis, 1982: 251). The agreements issued during the period of the grand coalitions in the 1960s were lengthy (Schneider, 1966; Müller, 1994). In Germany, the Federal Chancellor was the first 'architect' of the government who drew together the policy programme. In the 1960s, the parliamentary groups, or their leaders at least, became involved in the elaboration of what were coalition agreements in the actual sense. More rarely, agreements were drafted before the elections (Von Beyme, 1983: 26-33). Thus, in Austria and Germany, the writing of coalition agreements is also part of political practice.

Multipolar systems

As we know, majority coalitions are the predominant form of government in all multipolar systems except Denmark. In this last country, the eight governments that emerged between 1971 and 1992 all had minority status, and some but not all were cemented through a coalition agreement (Thomas, 1982: 124; KHA, 1982-1992).

Things are different in Iceland, where coalition agreements are formally issued if coalition formation is successful, and the negotiations on these agreements are considered to be the decisive stage of government formation (Grimsson, 1982: 15-162). Attention paid to the coalition agreement seems to be at its highest when the two largest parties, the Independence Party and the Progressive Party, join each other in government (Grimsson, 1982: 161; KHA, 1983-1992).

In Italy, coalition agreements have been part of political practice since the immediate postwar years. According to one author:

Centuries of forensic and casuistic training assist in composing a written agreement on the program, consisting of formulas grandiose enough to impress public opinion and ambiguous enough to be accepted by every delegation (Marradi, 1982: 58).

Occasionally, parliamentary groups or party congresses go beyond their ratifying role and press for amendments or block the negotiations (ibid, 58-59). Yet, policy negotiations are mostly not the most difficult part of government formation in this country. Often party leaders formulate the 'grandiose' and 'ambiguous' formulas referred to in the citation above fairly quickly, and see to it that these also are approved by their respective parties.

In Israel since 1977 the main point of change has been that the drafting of coalition agreements came to be directed less by the Labour party, not only for the obvious reason that this party has not always participated in government, but also because it came to be less dominant when it did take office. Negotiations in Israel often last most of the period of 119 days limited by constitution (Bara, 1992: 348). Yet, policy bargaining is depicted usually as being more pragmatic than in other countries with complex interparty relationships. One reason may be that, as argued more in general terms in the previous chapter, prospective coalition parties (Labour and/or Likud on the one hand and usually a number of small religious parties on the other) often take an interest in different policy areas, which means that bargaining often becomes a matter of 'portfoliology' (Seliktar, 1982: 305; Bara, 1992: 348).

The drafting of coalition agreements seems to be most rigorous in Finland, Belgium and the Netherlands. In Finland, coalition agreements began to be drafted in the early 1950s, and became more specific and detailed in the mid-1960s (Nousiainen, 1991). If, however, minority governments are formed, agreements are drafted less conscientiously (Nyholm, 1982: 108). Gradually, the extraparliamentary parties have become more influential in the negotiations, at the cost of the parliamentary groups. Another important factor in Finland is the president, who has considerable power in the government formation process (Pesonen and Thomas, 1983: 86-88).

In Belgium too the story of coalition agreements started in the 1960s. Though it was already customary that a new government issued a policy declaration when taking office, a written agreement was first drafted in 1965. Since then, negotiations on a coalition agreement have been a crucial part of government formation, and the result is that lengthy agreements are the rule rather than the exception. Bargaining is usually between party delegations presided over by the leaders of the extraparliamentary parties. On really important and controversial matters, negotiations mostly take place between the party presidents. 'Formal' approval of coalition agreements typically takes place at an extraparliamentary level, usually at a party congress or special conference.

Finally, in the Netherlands, the first coalition agreement was issued in 1963. In contrast with the usual procedure in Belgium, Dutch coalition agreements are formulated by the parliamentary groups, or in any case by their leaders and an increasing number of area

specialists. The agreement contains the substance of the government programme and indeed often forms a *fait accompli* for new ministers if these have not participated in the negotiations. The length of agreements has also increased, to some 29,000 words in 1989.

Thus, in multipolar systems the stage of policy negotiations during government formation is nearly always concluded by the adoption of a coalition agreement. As this is also the situation in bipolar systems and in unipolar systems when majority coalitions are formed, the general conclusion may be that coalition agreements are more related to coalition governments than to the type of bargaining system in which these governments ensue. Let us next take a closer look at the contents of these agreements in different countries and see whether there are differences in this respect.

General features of coalition policy agreements

Coalition agreements may be brief and consist of some stray notes at the back of a cigar box, or be lengthy documents carefully divided into different sections, subsections and paragraphs. In countries such as Belgium, Israel, Finland and the Netherlands, it is quite normal that coalition agreements reach a length of fifty pages of written text. They may also contain different kinds of intentions, varying between very general goals and specific policies, and from vague intentions that nobody can disagree with to detailed compromises entailing substantive concessions.

Further, there may be variation in the scope of coalition agreements. They may contain a limited set of issues relating to one or a few themes or policy areas, or deal with matters relating to many different areas. With regard to this last aspect, the 'dimensionality' of the policy space, which may be defined as the salience of several distinct themes or areas in interparty relationships, is relevant. Given that the forming of governments in multipolar systems is generally seen to involve more than one policy dimension, we may assume that the scope of coalition agreements in countries such as Belgium, Finland, Israel and the Netherlands is broad, and perhaps broader than elsewhere.

There is however a problem, in that information (certainly systematic information) on coalition agreements is very scanty and this information is also difficult to obtain. This is especially the case for the agreements, as these are not always published. Though parts of agreements or particular, politically important, arrangements are often leaked to the press, these are not more than fragments. In short, there are major practical problems if we want to make a more or less systematic analysis even of the general features of coalition agreements in different countries.

One way to cope with this problem is to consider what are called government programmes, which are usually published in most countries. Research has been carried out

recently on these programmes by the Manifesto Research Group (Laver & Budge, 1992; another relevant study is that of Nousiainen, 1993). As we have found that coalition agreements emerge in all countries and form the basis of government programmes, we may use the available information on programmes for our purpose. When doing so, it is necessary to realise that government programmes, or the versions read out in parliament called declarations, may be 'censored' with regard to details that are included in coalition agreements. This means that caution is needed when interpreting findings based on programmes.

Table 2.2 presents the estimated profiles of government programmes in the relevant countries for the period 1965-1990 (Iceland is excluded because this country was not considered in the aforementioned studies, and Denmark and Israel are indicated only as multipolar systems). Although variation is found within countries in this period, the profiles are estimated averages for the relevant period. The countries are classified into one of three categories relating to scope and into one of three categories with regard to the degree of specificity. (If the period before 1965 is also considered, the countries would be located at different positions, often in the first row and/or the first column in the table). This of course implies some simplification, but the aim here is to compare countries in a general manner.

Table 2.2
Scope and specificity of government programmes
(estimated averages for the period 1965-1990)

		scope		
		narrow	medium	broad
degree of specificity	low		Ireland Sweden Norway	
	mixed		Austria Denmark Germany Israel	Italy
	high			Finland Netherlands Belgium

Party motivations and coalition agreements

Party motivations are an important factor which may, at least partly, cut across the distinction between types of bargaining systems. In the discussion of policy bargaining in the previous chapter, the assumption was made that parties take an interest in policy. Though there is no

need to suddenly drop this assumption completely, it may be more correct for one country than for another. Beside policy goals, parties may expect particular benefits from getting into office, such as control of patronage appointments, or parties may be oriented on increasing support in the electorate. In reality there will be a combination of benefits, in which one motivation may prevail, either for a short period or more permanently (Budge & Laver, 1986; Strøm, 1990b).

When relating the variation in specificity of declarations to the primary motivation of parties in the different countries mentioned in recent empirical research, it appears that countries with relatively general or mixed policy declarations are often the ones in which policy is not the primary motivation of a party, at least not during government formation. This is especially the case in Ireland and Italy, and somewhat less in Austria and Norway. In Germany and Israel, where declarations have a mixed character, parties tend to see policy strongly in terms of portfolios, or particular portfolios. Parties in Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark are usually characterised as being driven more directly by policy goals. This is also the case with parties in Sweden, a country in which declarations however tend to be relatively brief, neither broad in scope nor particularly specific (Laver & Hunt, 1992: 73; Laver & Budge, 1992: 414). Though Sweden is thus somewhat exceptional in this respect, the point that stands out is that the three countries in which programmes are both broad and relatively specific (Finland, the Netherlands and Belgium) have multipolar systems.

The conclusion of this section is that coalition agreements occur in all countries with coalition cabinets, especially majority coalitions, and thus in all three types of bargaining systems. Once we start to consider the contents of coalition agreements, it is hard to deny that there are considerable differences between countries and also between types of bargaining systems. The finding which stands out is that with the exception of Italy, countries with multipolar systems tend to produce more comprehensive and specific programmes than other countries. Though we must be careful with extending these findings on programmes to coalition agreements, they are consistent with the general idea that in these countries policy is important to parties when forming and maintaining (or breaking) coalition governments.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have dealt with three types of bargaining systems, with the governments formed within these systems and with coalition agreements and their general characteristics in the different types of bargaining systems. I have shown that multipolar bargaining systems are not only coalition systems (as are bipolar systems), but, and more typically, are also systems from which coalition governments emerge after protracted bargaining, often

involving several formation attempts. These governments often deviate from the assumptions made in 'classical' coalition theory. That is, they are often neither minimal winning nor contain parties which are each other's neighbours on the traditional left right dimension. This suggests that interparty bargaining during the formation of these governments involves two or perhaps more policy dimensions.

Next, I focused on the element of policy in coalition bargaining in a multidimensional policy space, which is often found in multipolar systems. Not all dimensions that are relevant in a system will be equally important to parties involved in coalition bargaining, provided that parties are generally interested in policy in the first place. The implication for bargaining is that this involves not only, as Budge & Farlie (1983) have called it, 'direct confrontation' but also 'selective emphasis'. Still, the competitive nature of interparty relationships in multipolar systems means that confrontations are likely to be frequent, and may even be decisive, during government formation.

A key question with respect to the subject of coalition agreements is whether the results of policy bargaining are also written down. Parties may carefully put on record everything they have dealt with (even if there have been no real conflicts among them), or they may see so many points of divergence that they do not have the courage to start drafting an agreement. Another, and perhaps even more fundamental, question is whether the assumption that parties want to deal with policy during government formation is always correct. These questions were dealt with in the final section, in which we saw that the points about policy bargaining are not made in an empirical vacuum. Coalition agreements emerge mostly when majority coalitions are formed, and they are most comprehensive and specific in countries where the policy space contains several dimensions, or themes or areas, which are typically multipolar systems. This is a matter of party motivation, but probably there are other reasons why in some countries parties formulate comprehensive and specific coalition policy agreements during government formation. In the next chapter I consider the rationale for formulating coalition agreements and the functions and effects of agreements during the life of governments.

3

Functions and Effects of Coalition Policy Agreements

Policy negotiations between parties forming a government together are conducted to establish some form of agreement. Whether or not these negotiations are really substantive depends, among other things, on the extent to which the parties involved see differences in their respective preferences, the possibilities they see in government formation for dealing with these differences and, most fundamentally, the extent to which the parties are motivated by policy in the first place.

This chapter consists of four sections dealing with these points. Given the *terra pacts* depicted in the previous chapter, a first important point to consider is what views on coalition policy agreements exist. These views have been distilled from the literature, especially comparative (European) politics literature. This forms the substance of the first section. On the basis of these views, the possible functions of coalition policy agreements as intended by the parties are distinguished in section two. I discuss the possible empirical effects of coalition agreements in section three, where three hypotheses on these effects are presented. Finally, I deal with a number of factors which may be relevant to the process of enforcing agreements, and which may thus form favourable or unfavourable conditions for the implementation of arrangements.

RITUAL DANCES OR REAL CHANCES: TWO VIEWS OF COALITION POLICY AGREEMENTS

The absence of systematic studies of coalition agreements to date may be the reason why rather different notions with respect to these documents may be found in the literature. The literature pays special attention to the comparative studies of coalition governments which have emerged since the early 1980s (for example: Browne & Dreijmanis, 1982; Bogdanor, 1983a; Pridham, 1986; Laver & Budge, 1992; Blondel & Müller-Rommel, 1993). Two general, but different views on coalition agreements can be found and these are considered in the following paragraphs.

Bargaining on coalition agreements as a ritual dance

The first way of viewing policy bargaining could be called the 'sceptical' view. From this viewpoint, parties use this stage in government formation merely to underline their willingness to form a government together and to show to their respective followers that they do so not entirely for nothing. Typically, the price they ask is symbolical. Consider, for example, Luebbert's statement:

What makes the talks so long, difficult and complex is generally not the lack of goodwill among elites, but the fact that negotiations must appear the way they do in order to satisfy the members whose orientations are still largely attuned to the vocal, symbolic, and ideological aspects characteristic of each respective political subculture. It is wrong to assume that, because interparty negotiations take a long time, much is being negotiated among the parties. Most negotiation in cases of protracted government formation takes place between leaders and their followers and among rival factions within parties (1986: 52).

Luebbert sees parties as competition arenas for leadership positions as much as actors that are in competition with other parties. As the above citation illustrates amply, the author also sees party leaders primarily as policy *users*, rather than policy seekers. In this view, coalition policy agreements, before anything else, are elaborated for intra-party purposes. It is also worth quoting what Laver & Schofield say about coalition agreements:

While such a document is unambiguously the immediate output of coalition bargaining over policy, we must none the less be wary about its real political significance. It might, after all, be little more than window dressing (1990: 189).

Further:

There are several reasons why it is difficult to read a meaning into what appears on the face of it to be a fairly straightforward document (...) For example, parties with fundamental policy disagreements that none the less decide to go into government together will not want to draw attention to what divides them. Conversely, when there is clear agreement between parties on policy, they are likely to publicize this, however trivial the issue (...) Thus the published policy statement is a highly strategic document, the meaning of which is obscure to all but the most sophisticated of insiders (ibid: 191-192).

These notions are partly based on the work of the Manifesto Research Group referred to several times before. In work produced by this group, Laver & Budge also argue that published government programmes may not always reflect real government policy

positions because they may be 'patched up hastily between party leaders more as a public relation exercise' (1992: 410; see also Klingemann, Hofferbert & Budge, 1994: 33).

It is, however, the interpretation and understanding of coalition policy agreements by the 'insiders' referred to by Laver & Schofield which is important here. After all, these persons may also be the ones who are responsible for the elaboration and implementation of coalition agreements.

Moreover, it remains to be seen whether, as Laver & Schofield assert, parties deciding to form a government together will avoid drawing attention to major policy conflicts existing between them and instead emphasise agreement on noncontentious or even trivial issues. Apart from the need for party leaders to 'temper' their own office seeking drive to avoid alienation from their party rank and file, there is the problem of policy conflicts among the parties. If parties do not immediately draw attention to policy disagreement *in public*, ignoring such a disagreement altogether when forming a government may be a form of selfdeception.

It remains true that there is considerable variation between party motivations in countries in which coalition agreements occur, but precisely because there is *variation*, it seems equally justified to say that in some countries parties do pay attention to policy conflicts, and approach bargaining on coalition agreements in a different way. Again, differences between the scope and especially the specificity of policy programmes point in this direction.

Bargaining on coalition agreements as a real chance

The second view of policy bargaining during government formation is more positive. In one of the earlier works on coalition governments, Browne & Dreijmanis conclude for instance that

the key process which determines the value of coalition membership is seen to be the negotiation of a more or less formal agreement or bargain specifying the general expectations which actors may have of one another as coalition partners. Most authors agree that the primary concern of actors during these negotiations is to achieve an agreement which commits the government as a whole to a set of policies as similar as possible to their own policy positions. (...) In addition to establishing programmatic content to guide the behavior of cabinet coalition members, negotiation of a coalition agreement also provides the partners with an opportunity to establish the extent of their influence over the process of policy determination (1982: 349-350).

This is clearly a different view of bargaining on coalition agreements, though it must be

said that the country chapters on which Browne & Dreijmanis base their conclusion contain little systematic evidence of a substantive role for coalition agreements during the lifetime of governments.

The work of Peterson, De Ridder, Hobbs, & McClellan (1983) and Peterson & De Ridder (1986) is more directly focused on the role of coalition agreements. In contrast to the argument of policy avoidance during government formation, these authors call government formation a policy making arena *par excellence*. In their view it is an 'institutionalized extrainstitutional arena' that forms an important stage in a cumulative process of policy making. The government formation arena is seen to have the advantages of an informal context, in which no restricting conventions or institutional structures, such as formal legislative and administrative procedures, impede decision making (ibid: 82; Peterson & De Ridder, 1986: 567).

One key aspect of the conception of government formation is that it not only forms the start of a process of policymaking in a particular coalition government, but also follows immediately after the end of the previous government. In a chronological sense this is obvious enough, but the more specific point that Peterson et al. make is that issues which cause the fall of a government often return on the agenda during the formation of a new government. This is not only an interesting argument, it is also illustrated by empirical cases taken from Belgium and the Netherlands. In this context, we may recall that policy conflict is the most frequent cause of government dissolution in precisely the countries in which government programmes are comprehensive and specific, which also are multipolar systems.

Though policy negotiations may take place simultaneously in different work groups, the process in the view of Peterson et al. nonetheless contains several moments for the evaluation of results. The authors put it this way:

As the agreement is negotiated the participants are faced on each issue with the continual threefold choice of accepting terms, discontinuing negotiations or trying to improve terms through further bargaining; and those actors who are not direct participants in the negotiations are faced with continuous tactical choices concerning their relationship with the direct participants (1983: 72).

Finally, Peterson et al. have called coalition agreements reference documents for policymaking during the term of the government. As such these documents are seen to form at least part of the government agenda. More specifically, the agreement may

(1) indicate a range of alternative courses of action to be considered or specify a preferred alternative, (2) specify a framework to be filled in by the government at a later date, (3) indicate other procedures for reaching further agreement, (4) develop specific legislative proposals to be presented to the parliament or present some combination of the above (Peterson et al., 1983: 74).

In more recent work, other aspects of coalition agreements have been highlighted. Blondel & Müller-Rommel (1993: 9) for example argue that during the negotiations on an agreement areas of potential conflict are reduced and eliminated, which may smooth the path of the government. This may be less because harmony prevails than because the coalition agreement constrains the scope of governmental action. Budge & Keman (1990: 47) also argue that reaching agreement among parties is important because it reduces tensions and costs of internal negotiation and also averts the risk of conflict which may bring down the government.

In short, in the alternative view on policy bargaining during government formation, coalition agreements have a substantive meaning. This meaning may be substantive in the sense that agreements matter for policy decisions that the government is entitled to take formally once in office. This may be by mentioning the content of these policies, or by stipulating procedures for dealing with issues.

THREE FUNCTIONS OF COALITION POLICY AGREEMENTS

If formulating a coalition agreement is a ritual dance of parties before taking their seats at the cabinet table, there is little else to be said about why parties do this. If, however, parties see this process as a real chance to deal with policy, there may be more that drives them than an interest in policy.

Some more reasons why policy bargaining may be taken seriously

Other incentives for engaging in substantive bargaining seem to be both positive and negative. One possible reason that has been mentioned briefly is related to policy motivation, and regards 'inheriting' policy conflict from outgoing governments, especially if the outgoing government broke down due to an internal policy dispute and one or more parties engaged in the formation of a new government participated in that government. These parties may want to pay particular attention to the issues contested before these return on the cabinet agenda. Countries in which coalition parties return to office together frequently after they could not agree and dismantled the government are Belgium, Finland, Israel, Italy, and Denmark since the early 1980s. Another point which lies in the sphere of 'inheritance' concerns the phenomenon of political testaments drawn up by outgoing ministers and containing claims in these ministers' respective fields of jurisdiction. The testament of the minister of Finance especially is considered to be

important since cutbacks in government expenditure are high on the political agenda.

A more general factor is the existence of mutual mistrust between the relevant parties. Of course, in competitive parliamentary systems, parties will always display a certain level of mistrust towards each other. Mistrust in this sense is part of the game, and at least to an extent may be a matter of posture. Mutual mistrust however may also reach a higher level, beyond that stemming from electoral competition. Particular experiences may lead to increased mistrust; parties may also opt for strategies of polarisation, which they may do to strengthen their electoral basis. Provided that mistrust does not hinder the forming of a coalition in the first place, it may induce parties to pay special attention to the coalition policy agreement. In multipolar systems especially, mistrust between parties is increased by the salience of several different policy dimensions and the usually low level of electoral decisiveness; this is the extent to which election results work through in the composition of governments (see Strøm, 1984). Comprehensive and especially specific coalition agreements may be seen as an expression of this mistrust.

Apart from policy goals, previously experienced policy conflicts and mistrust between parties, another factor (which in part may be a result of these factors) is the institutionalisation of government formation in countries where coalition governments are imperative. In countries where the parliamentary groups of parties see government formation as one of the points where they can influence coalition policy, expectations have reinforced the process of institutionalisation. In these countries, the drawing up of a coalition agreement has become so much a matter of course that it would take many by surprise if a new government took office without a coalition agreement. This may further be seen in part as a response to the demands of party rank and file, especially where internal party democracy implies a substantive role for the extraparliamentary party.

The combination of these different factors may induce parties to make a serious job of drawing up a coalition agreement. This is important, as the institutionalisation of government formation alone, for example, may explain why agreements have become lengthier and broader in scope, but this need not imply that specific and detailed arrangements are made. Moreover, though mistrust between parties may have increased in most countries in the last two decades, coalition agreements have become really specific documents only in countries in which policy is important during government formation.

On the basis of the two views of coalition agreements and the points discussed above, three possible functions of coalition agreements may be distinguished. These are functions ascribed by the parties or party leaders themselves. They thus can also be called the intended effects of coalition agreements (assuming that coalition parties have the same intentions at least in this respect) as distinct from their actual effects during the life of governments.

The coalition agreement as a symbolic gesture

First, coalition agreements may have a *symbolic* function. In a way, all coalition agreements may be considered 'symbolic', in that they contain intentions, however substantive, which still have to be carried out by the government. In the present context, however, the term 'symbolic' should be understood in a different way. To those involved in government formation, drawing up a coalition agreement may be a symbolic gesture. It may be such a gesture at an interparty level, with leaders just wanting to underline their willingness to participate in the new government. This situation has been referred to as a ritual dance. The agreement may also be a gesture at an intraparty level, and be used by party leaders to satisfy the party rank and file. As said above, party followers usually have certain expectations on particular policies, and these expectations are mostly a point of concern for party leaders, at least to the extent that meeting such expectations is necessary to be re-elected. When the parties, or party leaders, perceive policy negotiations in this way, coalition agreements will contain rather general goals that no one is likely to disagree with.

In short, coalition agreements have a symbolic function if they are written exclusively to bring coalition parties together in a government and to satisfy the party rank and file or the general public. The intended effects of such documents are none other than to do just this. Hence once the government has taken office, a coalition agreement in such cases is as valuable as a cinema ticket after the show.

The coalition agreement as a policy agenda

Following from the view of policy negotiations as a real chance and government formation as a policy making arena, parties may also see coalition agreements in terms of more substantive functions. Coalition agreements may be meant to predefine coalition policy, or more specifically to predefine the policies to be pursued by the new government. This may be called the *agenda function*. We saw that coalition agreements may be more or less comprehensive and more or less detailed, and this is also likely to be the case with the different parts of these agreements. Some parts may contain substantive and specific intentions, which we could call *policy predetermination*, while other parts may contain mainly general goals or mention what matters are to be dealt with in the coming years. In that case we may speak of *policy indication*. We should however see this as a continuum rather than as a dichotomy, as in reality intentions included in coalition agreements may also take an intermediate form, without being really completely precooked decisions or only placing issues on the agenda. A measure of the degree of policy predefinition is the proportion of explicit compromises relative to implicit compromises.

The coalition agreement as an instrument for conflict prevention

Parties may make efforts to predefine coalition policy not only because they take an interest in policy, but also because they want to smooth the life of the government. They may try to prevent, as much as possible, controversial issues giving rise to political problems after the government has taken office. The third function, then, may be called the *conflict prevention function*.

In the coalition agreement of the Eyskens IV government in Belgium, formulated in 1968, the following was stated:

The present agreement regards exclusively those problems for which a basic agreement is considered indispensable. This enables the government to consider other possible problems in a calmer political climate (KHA, 1968: 419; author's translation).

Consider also this fragment taken from the coalition agreement of the third Lubbers government in the Netherlands, issued twenty years later, in 1989:

Two major parties that want to form a new and cohesive coalition must first pay broad attention to agreements that bridge differences in viewpoints. Substantive and procedural arrangements form the point of departure of the government (TK, 1989-90, 21132/8: 4; author's translation).

Coalition agreements may thus be meant to cement coalitions internally and streamline decision making within the government or the coalition at large. This may be either by providing procedures for dealing with particular controversial issues, or by piecing together substantive compromises. Here also, the result is a policy agenda which mentions intentions that must be implemented or elaborated during the government's term. At the same time, the parties may also limit the scope of governmental action for the sake of peace and the continuity of the coalition. In this case, the coalition agreement is likely to mention that substantive decisions will be postponed (issues of course may also be left unmentioned, but in that case it is difficult to speak of a conflict prevention function for a coalition agreement).

Coalition agreements may thus be formulated for different purposes, and for this reason they may have different functions for the parties involved. There is a certain hierarchy with regard to the three functions. This hierarchy represents the extent to which the agreement is believed to be instrumental to a substantive goal beyond government formation. At the lowest level, we find the symbolic function. If the agreement is meant to be largely symbolic, its purpose is to confirm that the parties are willing to form a government together. If the agreement is intended as a policy agenda, it may be

instrumental to policy making by providing something between a general policy framework and a set of specific policies which can be implemented straight away. Finally, if the agreement is meant to prevent conflict on certain issues occurring or re-occurring within the coalition, it may secure the continuity of the coalition at large.

This conceptual hierarchy does not however mean that the three functions can never occur together. If this is clear with respect to the agenda function and the conflict prevention function, it may also be the case with these substantive functions in combination with the symbolic function. Even if parties see important points of conflict and engage in negotiations on these points, they may at the same time draft paragraphs or even complete sections on subjects which are not very important to any of them, but nonetheless are incorporated in the coalition agreement to meet expectations from within society.

EFFECTS OF COALITION POLICY AGREEMENTS

It is one thing to formulate a coalition agreement with substantive intentions. It is a different matter, however, to implement such intentions. The question is whether the intended effects are the *actual* effects, or outcomes, of coalition agreements. In this section we deal with the possible empirical effects or outcomes of coalition agreements. Not all parts in coalition agreements, however, may be relevant in this respect. As said in the previous section, parties may include particular issues simply to meet expectations without caring too much about these matters. In following discussion the focus will be on controversial policy issues during government formation. Often such issues will also be key problems on the coalition formation agenda, though as said, parties may not give the same weight to all issues. The results of bargaining on these conflictual matters are explicit or implicit compromises, that is, arrangements containing substantive concessions or general and procedural agreements.

To say that issues are conflictual however does not mean that the 'hot issues' always divide *all* parties around the formation table, at least not if there are more than two parties. In a three party coalition, for example, there may be conflict over three issues, none of which is disputed among all three parties. Thus, policy conflict may be collective or semicollective. In reality, both types of conflict may occur next to each other during government formation, for example in different policy areas.

These points have important consequences for the way in which we envision coalition agreements and their possible effects during the life of governments. Certain parts of coalition agreements may have little to do with the uni or multidimensional character of

policy bargaining. This is simply because not all issues will have been the object of bargaining among the coalition parties. Though this need not mean that what at first sight appeared to be programmes with a broad scope now have very different features, it may be that at least the *intended* substantive effects of coalition agreements concern a relatively limited number of policy areas. Of course, all statements in coalition agreements which are 'doable' may be elaborated and implemented. If however our concern rests with really important issues which dominate the government formation agenda and the way in which these are dealt with by the parties, we should focus on the effects of these central issues. This also means that when speaking of the functions of coalition agreements, we should do so at the level of arrangements on these issues.

When focusing on written arrangements, we must realise that these may not all be the results of bargaining on central issues. If controversial matters are left outside the coalition agreement (thus are not even mentioned) this is also a result, and indeed one that may be important. In such cases, the actual role of the coalition agreement as a policy agenda and a conflict prevention instrument is limited even before we have started to consider the effects of what *is* included in the agreement. This means that when studying empirical cases of government formation, such 'omissions' should be taken into account.

Effects of explicit and implicit compromises

Policy conflicts may take different forms, and the results of bargaining on conflictual issues may also vary. The distinction made by Luebbert between explicit and implicit compromises is relevant at this conceptual level. Explicit compromises were seen to contain unilateral or mutual concessions on the substance of issues. Implicit compromises were agreements to disagree, which may consist of procedural arrangements such as postponements or statements which are so general or vague that none of the parties sees its preferences violated. Here, we may assume that implicit compromises emerge if central party values are at stake and issues do not regard quantities or cannot be defined in such terms. These issues will often be in the fields of what could be called 'immaterial' policy: cultural, ethno/linguistic, and ethical questions. Explicit compromises are more likely to occur in the area of socio-economic policy, especially financial policy. In either case, it is important to realise that in the present context arrangements are relevant only in cases of manifest policy conflict among the prospective coalition parties.

Following from the 'policy' and 'peace' elements in the functions of coalition agreements, the effects or outcomes of the two types of arrangements may be seen in terms of the absence or recurrence of conflict among the parties and in terms of the implementation or nonimplementation of substantive or procedural arrangements. The four possible outcomes are logically (1) the implementation of arrangements without conflict, (2) implementation involving conflict, (3) nonimplementation and no conflict,

and (4) conflict in combination with nonimplementation. It should be noticed that (3) and (4) may mean that either substantive or procedural decisions are taken in deviation from the agreement, or that no decisions are taken at all.

Explicit compromises and the streamlining of policy making

Explicit compromises may be seen as cases in which parties have engaged in policy predelineation, and to a certain degree of specificity. Given this relatively specific character of explicit compromises, which may also involve a fair amount of time and energy of the coalition parties, we might expect that government policy conforms to the contents of these compromises. Given that explicit compromises are the result of bargaining on controversial issues, another possible effect is that this implementation takes place without further, or new, party political conflict on the relative issues within the government or the coalition at large. This type of arrangement may be expected to be functional both in terms of policy and in terms of conflict prevention. Our first hypothesis is thus: *explicit compromises are implemented in a peaceful way.*

Implicit compromises and the recurrence of conflict

If implicit compromises are formulated, negotiations have not resulted in a really substantive agreement. There may be very general or even ambiguous arrangements on the disputed matters, or procedural arrangements of some kind. In terms of policy, the effects of implicit compromises may become visible only after some time, if there are any effects at all. This is because actual policy must still be elaborated, or because no substantive policy is intended. Here, it is important to distinguish between arrangements containing general statements about issues which need to be elaborated before we can actually speak of policy, and procedural arrangements such as postponents of decisions which are meant to 'freeze' policy making. General arrangements may place particular issues on the coalition agenda, and be general rather than specific. Procedural arrangements may be meant to remove particular issues from the coalition agenda, for a short time or until after the next scheduled elections.

Expectations about the effects of these types of arrangements may also differ, though it is evident that both cases involve policy indication rather than predetermination. Hypothesis 2 is that *procedural arrangements prevent the recurrence of conflict without leading to substantive policy decisions during the lifetime of the government.* The third hypothesis is that *general arrangements do not prevent the recurrence of conflict and form the basis of substantive and formally approved decisions less often than explicit compromises.* The reason for expecting fewer substantive policy decisions is that conflict may paralyse policy making.

Figure 3.1
Outcomes of explicit and implicit compromises
 (hypothetical)

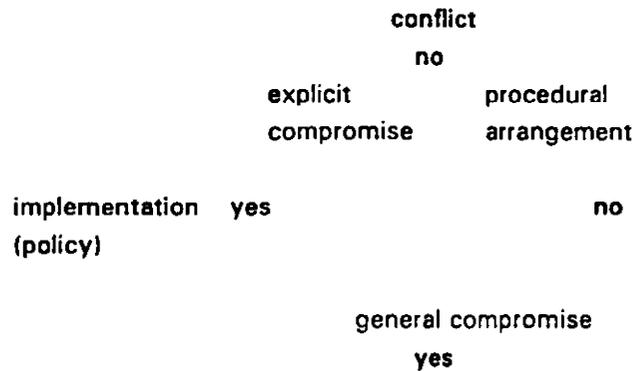


Figure 3.1 summarises the hypothetical outcomes of explicit and implicit compromises. This representation may also be used when examining the empirical effects of individual arrangements or arrangements in particular policy areas, and indeed for depicting successes and failures of coalitions. With respect to procedural arrangements, one of the two types of implicit compromises, it must be noticed that these are placed at the negative end of the implementation scale on the understanding that implementation refers to *substantive* policy decisions; with respect to the observation of *procedural* (and nonsubstantive) arrangements, we may be more positive about the likelihood of implementation. General implicit compromises are placed in an intermediate position in the figure because substantive results are expected to emerge less often than when compromises are explicit.

It must also be emphasised that the hypotheses are not based on what *the parties* see as likely effects, at least not in the way as parties were said to perceive the functions of coalition agreements. Instead, the hypotheses concern outcomes which are likely to occur if parties see bargaining on policy as a real chance. The difference between explicit and implicit compromises in this respect is a difference in the extent to which parties have reached substantive agreement on conflictual issues. Whether explicit compromises really reflect true consensus and implicit compromises do have a 'boomerang' effect in terms of conflict is something that we can only tell after considering empirical cases of the formation and life of governments.

ENFORCEMENT OF ARRANGEMENTS

Before considering such empirical cases, there are some other points to be made about the effects of coalition agreements. Arrangements will often not contain equal payoffs to all parties. If the relevant issues on which compromises were made during government formation are on the agenda, parties may begin to look differently at these compromises, that is, on their concessions. Though this need not mean that parties are suddenly unwilling to compromise at all, they may develop incentives to try to increase their payoffs from arrangements in certain areas. This raises the question of the *enforcement* of coalition agreements. What may cause arrangements to be observed or not and to be implemented or amended by the coalition parties?

Coalition policy agreements are sometimes called contracts. An important difference however is that coalition agreements are not binding in a legal sense. There is no independent judge who can enforce arrangements written down in a coalition agreement. Coalition agreements are formulated by parties, and these parties also have a strong hand in deciding whether or not these agreements are carried out.

Given the hypotheses on the effects of explicit and implicit compromises, the general idea is that explicit compromises are more 'implementable' than implicit compromises, because in the case of implicit compromises (and especially in that of general arrangements) it may not be clear *what* exactly is to be observed and carried out in the first place. Even specific compromises resulting from extensive negotiations however, remain intentions and it seems difficult to maintain that these are entirely 'self policing'. The enforcement of arrangements may be seen in connection with moral commitments or with other forces facilitating (or complicating) the implementation of arrangements. Here, characteristics of coalitions and their composite elements may come into play, as well as the general economic context in which these coalitions must operate. Such characteristics may thus be favourable or unfavourable conditions for the implementation of explicit and implicit compromises.

Enforcement of arrangements as a moral obligation

It is often said that agreements are morally binding, especially in countries where extensive and relatively specific coalition agreements are customary. Vernon Bogdanor has called coalition agreements the constitution of coalitions. According to this author, the agreement must be honoured in good faith if the coalition partners are to maintain confidence in each other (1983a: 271). Indeed, the notion of moral obligation may even be found in the text of coalition agreements. The first written coalition agreements in the Netherlands (1963 and 1965) opened with a paragraph on what was called 'the nature and

extent of commitments'. The agreement issued in 1963 for instance stated that

Beside the 'formal' commitment, there is also the moral commitment, which is in the nature of the agreement and exists between the government and the affiliated groups in parliament (Handelingen Tweede Kamer, Buitengewone Zitting, 1963: 122; author's translation).

Though not explicitly mentioned in the text of agreements, this kind of commitment certainly was also felt in more recent coalitions. As one Dutch minister recalled in 1986:

We promised to honour the coalition agreement. The only thing we really discussed in the government's constituent meeting was the value of the coalition agreement (...) We all felt that the agreement was not something to be forgotten so easily (...) Indeed, some ministers always had the document with them (Van Tijn & Van Weezel, 1986: 62-63; author's translation).

The problem with the principle of *pacta sunt servanda* is of course that it is difficult to assess its empirical relevance. Even if the quotations above refer directly to party spokespeople who were involved in the drafting and implementation of the coalition agreement, we can only assume that moral principles played and continue to play a part. We may be sceptical about this, given the different forces which were seen earlier to guide parties during government formation. Related to this, the moral factor in itself has little potential for explaining outcomes, as it cannot be related to *failures* in any meaningful way. After all, if we find that arrangements are not observed, it does not help us further to say that in such cases parties have broken a moral code, or that the moral element has been absent altogether. For these reasons, it seems better to take the moral aspect of commitments into account when dealing with empirical cases, but further deal with it as one among other possible factors.

Favourable and unfavourable conditions for the enforcement of arrangements

What other factors play a part in the enforcement process? Here, we may distinguish between exogenous factors such as the economic situation and factors which regard, or are characteristics of, coalitions and their composite parts. To an extent, these factors are those that in the literature on coalition duration are called 'events', occurring as a result of the environment, and 'attributes' of coalitions (Browne, Frensdreis & Gleiber, 1984, 1988; Strøm, 1984, 1988; Warwick, 1979, 1993). With respect to coalition attributes i.e. to endogenous factors, we may further distinguish between the levels of the coalition, the parties, the government, and that of individuals. At the level of coalitions, *reciprocal*

control between parties may influence enforcement positively. This factor may be considered together with a structural characteristic of coalitions, which is the number of parties. A second factor at this level is the presence of mostly informal *coalition committees*. At party level, *internal unity*, which may be defined as the absence of internal divisions on issues in relevant policy areas, may be a favourable condition. At the level of the government, the *presence of negotiators* may facilitate the elaboration and implementation of arrangements. Moreover, the *prime minister* may or may not be a guardian of the coalition agreement. Finally, the nature of *personal relationships* may play a part. Let us see how these factors may relate to the enforcement of arrangements.

The number of coalition parties and reciprocal control

A principle or mechanism which may guide parties in their behaviour with respect to the coalition agreement is *reciprocal control*. If the moral factor is generally considered to be a positive inducement, reciprocal control seems to be based on negative incentives. In this context, reciprocal control means that one party refrains from breaking an arrangement, one that contains few payoffs, to avoid reprisals from one or more of the other parties on other arrangements, which may contain more payoffs for the first party. Coalition parties thus may be seen as each other's hostages on the central issues in the coalition agreement. An additional disincentive to breaking arrangements unilaterally may be that it is likely to have consequences for government formations in the future. A party breaking arrangements may lose its credibility. The possible gains of breaking arrangements on certain issues may be smaller than the costs of becoming a party that is generally considered unreliable.

Reciprocal control, however, may not be equally effective in all situations. It may be related to a basic structural characteristic of coalitions, which is the number of parties. The assumption is that as the number of coalition parties increases from two to three or more, reciprocal control becomes more difficult to maintain (becomes less effective).¹ This may be so, even if during government formation issues are not always collectively conflictual. With three or four parties and thus greater complexity in bargaining relationships, an individual party may be tempted to call into question a particular compromise when expecting that the other parties will not agree so easily to their response. Perhaps, one of the other parties even supports the idea of renegotiating the relevant arrangement. This may be the estimation of each individual party, and the result may be a gradual erosion of the coalition agreement as matters are on the cabinet agenda. This process may go on until for one party the price becomes too high, forcing a coalition crisis.

¹ The difference between two party and multiparty coalitions does not always correspond to the distinction between minimal winning and surplus majority coalitions; this is also the case when only considering majority coalitions.

In two party coalitions, reciprocal control may be stronger. In the 'face to face' bargaining relationship of two parties, retaliation seems to be a more serious threat. Only an external party could support a coalition party when challenging particular arrangements. This however is something to which the second party may react by making similar manoeuvres and by threatening a coalition crisis. An appetite for forming legislative coalitions with external parties may be reduced as a result. The only situation in which all this may not apply is if one particular party has the least payoffs on all issues. In this case, the party may have little to lose and try to increase payoffs, even at considerable risk. Such situations, however, are not likely to occur often, as parties which can only participate in a new government by conceding on all relevant issues may prefer to stay outside the government.

Briefly, in situations in which payoffs from coalition bargaining are unequal at the level of individual arrangements but not at the aggregate level, the mechanism of reciprocal control may be more effective in two party coalitions. The likely result is that in these coalitions the rate of implementation of arrangements in coalition agreements is higher than in multiparty coalitions.

Coalition committees as alternative policy making arenas

Perhaps less 'fixed' but still a potentially relevant factor at the level of the coalition at large is the presence, or absence, of coalition committees. Coalition committees are the informal part of the 'coalition apparatus', the decision making structures 'below' but more typically 'above' the level of the cabinet.

Coalition committees contain spokespersons, and often prominent members, from different sections of the parties, and they may vary in size. The exact composition will vary from case to case, and depends, in part, on the internal power structures within parties. Coalition committees should be distinguished from formal and informal cabinet committees and parliamentary committees, which are confined to the sphere of the cabinet and parliament. The most well known examples (and also the most formalised coalition committees) in the comparative literature are the 'Kressbonner Kreis' in Germany (1966-69) and the steering committee during the periods of the grand coalitions in Austria (Mackie & Hogwood, 1985: 12-14).

If coalition committees are present, they may form an alternative arena of policy making and facilitate the resolution of conflict. This alternative arena may resemble the government formation arena, even if it is confined to particular policy fields. The assumption is that the presence of a coalition committee (or perhaps of more than one committee if the distinction between policy fields is relevant) is a favourable condition to the elaboration and implementation of arrangements.

Negotiators as ministers with relevant portfolios

At the level of the government, we may distinguish between ministers who have

participated in policy bargaining and ministers without this background. If the 'founding fathers' of the coalition participate in the government and take portfolios in the areas in which bargaining has taken place, arrangements may be elaborated and implemented more easily, at least within the government. This is often the case if these ministers form the top of the cabinet (the prime minister and one or more vice prime ministers, for example). Such ministers may feel that their efforts were not in vain.²

Ministers who have not been a negotiator may see the coalition agreement as a package of *faits accomplis*, and even if they are willing to carry out arrangements, these arrangements may not always be entirely clear or perhaps contain elements of which only the negotiators are able to give a more or less uniform interpretation. To ensure that ministers understand and/or accept the arrangements in their field of jurisdiction will not be easy, especially if these ministers see their job as one involving a certain degree of autonomy. On the basis of these points, we may assume that if negotiators obtain portfolios that are relevant to the central fields in which bargaining has taken place, this facilitates the enforcement of arrangements. Conversely, if 'outsiders' take the relevant portfolios, this may decrease the likelihood of implementation of arrangements.

The prime minister as a guardian of the coalition agreement

In most countries, the formateur becomes the new prime minister. He or she may also have participated in policy negotiations in an earlier stage of the formation process. The prime minister is thus often an insider; but even without such a personal involvement in government formation, the prime minister may have the special task of streamlining cabinet decision making, by setting the agenda, for example, and keeping the coalition together by arbitrating in conflicts. This implies the role of a guardian of the coalition agreement.

The extent to which the prime minister may have a positive or negative influence on the enforcement of arrangements is likely to depend on competences, on his or her role perception, and on the perception of payoffs from arrangements. If the prime minister was involved in policy bargaining and is fairly satisfied with the results, he or she may be expected to guard and guide the implementation of arrangements. The prime minister may be an *activist*, which means that there is direct personal involvement in deciding on the substance of policies, or be an *arbitrator*, a more procedural role concerning conflict resolution mainly (Blondel & Müller-Rommel, 1993: 14-15). These two roles, however, are not necessarily confined to the situation in which a prime minister wants to act as a guardian of the coalition agreement; activism may also take the

² In some countries, negotiators may become ministers and at the same time take, or retain, a seat in parliament. This may facilitate enforcement, though we should realise that the parliamentary groups are larger, and thus are likely to include more 'outsiders', than the ministerial section of the parties.

form of proposing policies which are in contradiction to the agreement, and arbitration may be more oriented towards restoring peace in general than to putting ministers on track with the agreement.

Thus, it is the combination of the extent of prime ministerial support for the coalition agreement with the general role perception of the prime minister that may facilitate or hinder the enforcement of arrangements. The two extremes are here a prime minister who fully identifies him or herself with the agreement and actively participates in the translation of intentions into formal decisions, and a prime minister who resists arrangements and for this reason reacts rather than acts when matters relating to the agreement are on the cabinet agenda.

The internal unity of coalition parties

The above factors concern different sections of parties (parliamentary groups, ministers, party prominents outside the formal decision making bodies), and it must be realised that parties are certainly not always internally homogenous with respect to policy questions. During government formation, internal unity and discipline may still be fairly strong because the party's bargaining position is at stake (unless weakening this position is what one group or faction is aiming at). Preserving such intraparty unity, however, may become less easy after the negotiations are concluded and the government is ready to take or has taken office. In countries where the internal rules of parties require that the results of formation bargaining are formally approved, usually at a party congress or a special delegates conference, internal party divisions may become manifest before the formal installation of the government.³ More or less institutionalised groups or factions especially may be relevant in this respect, as these are often led by party prominents, which means that internal discipline will not be so easy to restore. The assumption here may be that manifest internal divisions within parties in particular fields hinder the implementation of arrangements in these fields, while the absence of such centrifugal forces may be a favourable condition for enforcement.

Personal relationships

A factor which largely speaks for itself is the nature of personal relationships between party prominents, both within and outside the sphere of the government. As the moral aspect, however, this factor is difficult to assess empirically. Only cases of personal clashes which have become public (and have been recorded) allow us to say something

³ Party votes may not always be indicative of divisions on policy, as party leaders often throw their weight into the discussions at congresses or conferences, and may make votes on programmatic achievements into a sort of miniplebiscites. In such situations, delegates or, if approval is to be given by the parliamentary group, parliamentary representatives may vote for the negotiation results as an act of loyalty to the party leader, so that actual policy differences do not become manifest.

about the impact of personal relationships on the implementation of arrangements, which in such cases is likely to be negative. Generally 'good' relationships between ministers and/or other party representatives may form a favourable context for decision making, but finding clear indications of the relevance of this factor, for positive outcomes, will be extremely difficult. We can only speak of personal relationships in a meaningful way if there are clear indications that these play a part. As said, this is most likely to be the case in connection with failures.

The economic context

Finally, a factor which often is seen to encroach the plans of governments is the general economic situation, or more precisely a deterioration of the state of the national economy. This factor may be relevant first of all to the implementation of arrangements in the field of financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy. The point is that arrangements in these fields may come to be considered out of date by all parties or by part of the coalition. This may be so especially if intentions are specific. The assumption is therefore that economic difficulties form an unfavourable condition for the enforcement of arrangements on financial/budgetary and socio-economic issues.

Figure 3.2 summarises the different factors which are assumed to influence the enforcement of explicit and implicit compromises, the possible conditions for success and failure. Here, of course, we must realise that the processes we will be dealing with are highly complex, in which relationships between variables are often not unidirectional. In the present context, no single factor is expected to be a sufficient or necessary condition for success. Moreover, we should realise that the terms 'success' and 'failure' may mean different things to different parties. In the present context, 'success' and 'failure' concern the question whether or not arrangements are elaborated and implemented and/or prevent interparty conflicts re-emerging. (Whether implemented arrangements are always perceived as a success by all coalition parties and the arrangements remaining dead letters as failure by all is a different matter.)

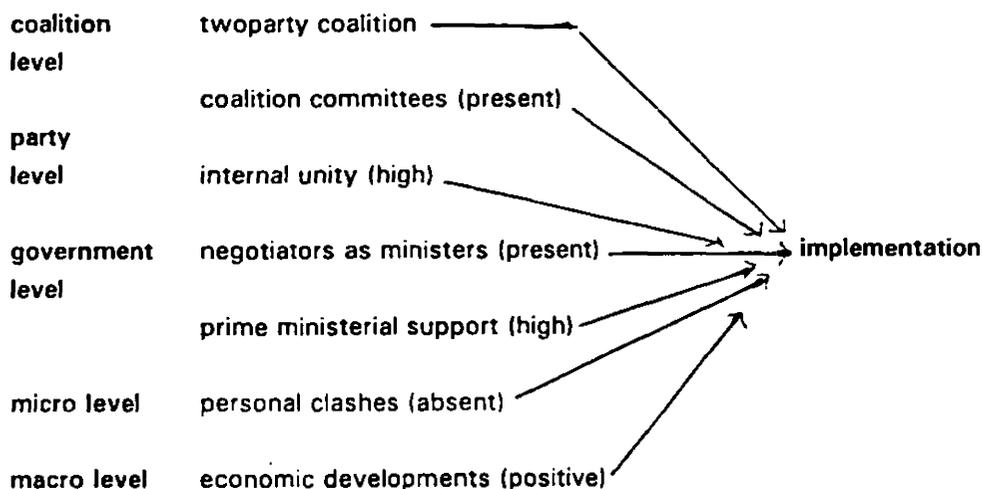
Further, if we speak of implementation, this is confined to the political sphere. Thus, we may speak of success if, depending on the contents of the relative arrangements, arrangements (procedural or substantive) are carried out and (in the case of substantive arrangements) decisions are approved in the formal decision making institutions. For some decisions, governmental approval will be sufficient, but for others there may be the additional, and constitutional, requirement of parliamentary approval. This is most evident when decisions are incorporated in legislation.

A final important point to make at this stage is that we should realise that governments often do not last their full constitutional term in office. In some countries, this is the exception rather than the rule, and in a previous chapter we saw that these countries are the ones in which, since the late 1960s, coalition agreements have a broad

scope and are relatively specific. Obviously, the premature end of a government also means the end of the story of the implementation of the coalition agreement, at least during the term of *that* government. The point to appreciate however, is that the cases which we must call failures may not all have been caused directly by coalition conflict. If conflict on one particular issue triggers the fall of a government, it may be that other arrangements did not give rise to problems, or perhaps were not even dealt with at all. Such indirect cases of failure, which are substantive failures but not necessarily failures in terms of new conflict breaking out, must be distinguished from direct failures.

Figure 3.2

Factors influencing the enforcement of arrangements



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have dealt with the functions of coalitions agreements and with their possible effects during the life of a government. The emerging variation in general features of coalition agreements was found to be reflected in the literature, as far as existing coalition research has something to say about this subject. Negotiations on coalition policy agreements are either depicted as a ritual dance around the formation table, its purpose being to do little else than to demonstrate to the outside world that the parties have agreed to join each other in a new government, or they are viewed as having a more substantive meaning, which carries beyond the installation of the government. Party spokespeople may pay attention to policy before taking office because they care about policy. Other incentives are programmatic demands from within the relevant parties and especially, mistrust between parties. In multipolar systems, such mistrust may be

reinforced by the 'multidimensionality' of interparty competition.

On the basis of these views, three possible functions of coalition policy agreements were distinguished. Party leaders may draw up an agreement for largely symbolic purposes; they may formulate some common and general policy intentions merely as a confirmation of their cooperation in a new government coalition. Alternatively, party spokespersons may engage in policy negotiations to predefine coalition policy, especially on important and controversial issues. If parties are so inclined, the coalition agreement may be meant to constitute (part of) the coalitional agenda and, still in the perception of the parties, have a conflict prevention function.

If coalition agreements are indeed formulated for substantive purposes, the actual effects of these agreements may vary. When examining these possible effects, we began by limiting our focus to those matters on which the parties are likely to direct most of their attention during government formation, the controversial issues. The actual scope of policy bargaining may vary from country to country and also between coalitions, but generally it seems to be broadest in multipolar systems, where several policy dimensions are generally salient during government formation.

This focus on arrangements made on controversial issues brought us to the distinction between explicit and implicit compromises, with respect to which three hypotheses were formulated. The first hypothesis was that explicit compromises, as substantive and relatively specific arrangements, are implemented without giving rise to new conflict. The second hypothesis was that procedural arrangements prevent the recurrence of conflicts, but do not lead to substantive decisions. The third hypothesis was that the elaboration of implicit compromises containing general and nonprocedural statements involves conflict and leads to substantive outcomes less often than when explicit compromises have been made.

These hypothesised effects of arrangements cannot be seen in isolation from favourable or unfavourable conditions to the enforcement of these arrangements. After all, whether general or specific, compromises cannot be expected to be entirely a matter of moral commitments. Favourable or unfavourable conditions for implementation were seen to concern characteristics of coalitions and their composite parts, as well as external influences. Put somewhat differently, the relevant factors concerned characteristics of the actors and the arenas in which these actors interact. The broader economic environment was also considered to be a potentially relevant factor.

These factors are called 'conditions', and this must be understood in the sense that they may influence the choices and behaviour of those engaged with the implementation of the coalition agreement. The enforcement problem must be seen in the light of the continuous temptation for individual parties to try to increase payoffs from arrangements. When considering these factors in empirical cases of coalition governments, and thus dealing with actual outcomes, the different favourable and unfavourable conditions may form elements of an explanation of successes and failures. These successes and failures

and the factors which may account for both types of outcomes are the central points of attention in the case studies to which we now turn.

4

Introduction to the Case Studies

In the preceding chapters we have moved from government formation and policy bargaining in general to bargaining on policy conflicts in government formation and its possible effects. It is now time to consider the way in which the questions with respect to arrangements on policy conflicts may be investigated empirically. This chapter contains an introduction to such an empirical investigation, which will consist of case studies of coalition governments in the Netherlands and Belgium. First, I deal briefly with the approach that will be followed in these case studies. Next, I discuss the central features of coalition governments and agreements in the Netherlands and Belgium to provide the relevant context from which the case studies will be selected. Finally, we go into the selection and organisation of the case studies.

FROM POLICY CONFLICTS TO ARRANGEMENTS, AND FROM ARRANGEMENTS TO OUTCOMES

Given that parties focus on conflictual issues during government formation, such conflictual issues form the point of departure for our empirical investigation of the functions and effects of coalition agreements. It is important to distinguish *manifest* conflicts from matters which are a *potential* source of dispute without however being discussed during government formation. This second category of issues will not be considered. In the present context, manifest conflict means that parties conduct negotiations on issues during government formation. As argued in chapter three, policy conflicts may become manifest in and after election campaigns, but they may also be 'inherited' from the previous government, especially if that government broke down over internal policy disputes. If conflictual issues are the 'input' to government formation, arrangements on these issues are one sort of 'output'. I only consider arrangements which are written down and as such form the key elements in coalition agreements.

The central question in this study regards the effects of these arrangements, which take the form of explicit or implicit compromises. This question will be dealt with by examining the three hypotheses on the effects of explicit and implicit compromises. Do

explicit compromises really function to prevent conflict and do they predelineate or indeed predetermine coalition policy? Are implicit compromises counterproductive in terms of conflict prevention and thus only conceal conflicts which re-emerge after the government has taken office, except when these arrangements take the form of procedural agreements? Further, is there empirical evidence for the assumptions made about the impact of coalition characteristics on the implementation of arrangements and for the assumptions about the influence of personal relationships and the general economic situation? These questions require that we consider the formation and functioning of coalitions in some detail, that is, that we look at arrangements in their relevant context. It may be possible to do this by conducting a limited number of case studies.

GOVERNMENTS AND COALITION AGREEMENTS IN BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS

The most relevant countries given the points of interest presented in the preceding chapters are those which can be classified as multipolar systems. In countries such as Belgium, Finland, the Netherlands, and to a somewhat less extent in Israel and Denmark, parties see government formation as a real chance to start or continue bargaining on policy, which is typically 'multidimensional'. Most competitive multiparty systems display a certain level of interparty mistrust, but the higher complexity of bargaining relationships and the frequent occurrence of government dissolutions due to internal policy disputes in multipolar systems are likely to raise this level of mistrust in this type of systems. Multipolar systems were also found in countries where coalition agreements are most comprehensive and specific, a codification of mistrust. Thus, especially with respect to the aforementioned countries, the question of the effects of arrangements on policy conflicts is an important one.

Given the kind of questions to be dealt with when conducting empirical studies of coalitions, it is not feasible to consider more than five cases (coalitions). Even if what is of interest is first of all the effects of arrangements on policy conflicts in general, it is necessary to consider, at least to an extent, the cases as 'wholes'. Indeed, outcomes of particular arrangements may be influenced by outcomes of other arrangements. It is also important to realise this when trying to explain the successes and failures of particular coalition governments.

This constraint still leaves the choice of taking one case from each of the countries mentioned, or taking a limited number of countries and doing more than one case study per country. In the present study, the second option seems to be the best alternative. Although the five countries just mentioned have the same type of bargaining systems,

sufficient differences remain to make an empirical study involving all these countries rather complex. More practical constraints also make it difficult to conduct case studies of governments in four or five countries. These constraints regard the availability and accessibility of information, first of all coalition agreements, which as said are not always published.

By confining the study to two countries, it is possible to compare outcomes of different agreements between these countries, as well as within them. Though considering two cases per country does not mean that these are 'representative' (neither in general nor in particular for these countries), they may provide us with more empirical evidence or counterevidence for our hypotheses for these two countries.

The two countries on which I focus are the Netherlands and Belgium. In a recent study of coalition policy in the Netherlands, it is asserted that '(agreements) now have a fundamental influence on nearly all important decisions that a government must take' (Tops & Dittrich, 1992: 282). Agreements also receive broad attention in the media. In both countries, there has been debate over the status of agreements and even on the supposed tension between the practice of formulating agreements and parliamentary democracy. In one view, coalition agreements have drastically reduced the role of parliament (and certainly that of the opposition) in important matters (Neels, 1975; Bovend'Eert, 1988). For these reasons, questions on the functions and effects of coalition agreements seem to be especially important for the Netherlands and Belgium. The period from which the case studies will be selected spans 1965 to 1990 (though in the Netherlands the first written coalition agreement was produced in 1963).

Continuity and change in coalition politics

Belgium and the Netherlands are usually placed in the same tradition of the politics of accommodation, though both systems have become more polarised and politicised since the late 1960s. The emergence of coalition agreements in the mid 1960s may be seen as a symptom of the tradition of accommodation but may also be seen in relation to changes in the political culture. This is related to the former through the practice of negotiations between party prominents in an informal setting, often in secret (the classical study here is Lijphart, 1968). Peterson et al. (1986) called this the 'institutionalized extrainstitutional arena'.

Polarisation and politicisation have become manifest in different ways. At the level of the bargaining system, open hostilities between parties have increased. In the Netherlands, the Social Democrats (PvdA) and the Liberals (VVD) have mutually excluded each other since 1959, while in 1967 the PvdA began to pursue a strongly polarising 'majority strategy' to form an alternative to governments including the

Christian Democrats (CDA, until 1980 KVP), which have been in uninterrupted office since 1918. In Belgium, the traditional party 'families' split into separate French speaking and Dutch speaking parties in the period between 1968 and 1978, while in the same period, the regionalist parties (the Flemish People's Union, VU, the *Rassemblement Wallon*, RW, and the Democratic Front of Francophones, FDF, with its basis in Brussels) gained seats and became relevant in the coalition game. In the 1980s, the regionalist parties declined, especially the French speaking ones, and coalition politics increasingly came to be dominated by the Dutch speaking CVP and the Wallonian *Parti Socialiste* (PS), the two largest parties.

One crucial development is that policy bargaining during government formation became truly 'multidimensional' during the 1970s, which, in the present context, means that parties had to deal with issues in several major policy fields where they have strong, and often conflicting, preferences. In Belgium, language and community issues appear on the agenda, and since the economic recession in the mid 1970s, financial and economic policy has formed a second and important area of interparty conflict. Though other matters do not appear to be permanently salient, subjects relating to the 'old' religious cleavage (school policy and ethical problems such as abortion) have frequently emerged on the government formation agenda (De Ridder & Fraga, 1986: 386-388).

Financial and economic issues have also formed an important subject of interparty negotiations in the Netherlands. Other relevant subjects in this country have been policy on real estate, the media, nuclear policy, and, as in Belgium, issues relating to the religious secular divide (Maas, 1982).

Issues from these policy areas have thus been central to the negotiations during the formation of coalitions, and they may have been sufficiently divisive to make other coalitions unfeasible, or at least to have contributed to their unfeasibility. In the following paragraphs I consider briefly the general patterns of government formation and the results in both countries.

The process and products of government formation

In most parliamentary democracies, the process of government formation is preceded by elections. This however, has not always been the case in the Netherland and Belgium. In both countries, *fliegende Wechsel* (coalition changes without preceding elections) have occurred, and while in the Netherlands this practice was abandoned in 1967, in Belgium such changes still occurred in the 1980s. The most extreme case was the year 1980, when four different governments held office. Typically, in both countries, the 'responsiveness' of parliamentary elections is low; relevant parties that gain seats do not take office more often than those losing seats. In fact, the reverse is even true. Pre-electoral coalitions are relatively rare. It hardly needs to be emphasised that these points will add to the

complexity of government formation.

General characteristics of the government formation process

The government formation process consists of three stages, with policy negotiations often, if not always, following after a particular party combination is formed. The distribution of portfolios is always the final stage (Peterson et al, 1983; Laver & Budge, 1992: 415). In both countries, however, the party configuration sometimes changes during the discussions on policy, so that there may be some overlap between the two stages. This corresponds with our earlier finding that in multipolar systems governments often ensue after three or more formation attempts.

Not surprisingly, government formation in the Netherlands and Belgium takes months rather than days. Negotiations on the coalition agreement usually take more time than the other stages during government formation. In Belgium, the average length of government formation between 1945 and 1965 was 1.5 month, involving 2.2 attempts on average, and in the Netherlands this was 2.5 months, with 4.3 attempts. In the period 1965-1990 in Belgium, when coalition agreements were issued, government formation on average lasted 2.5 months, with 3.5 attempts made to form the government. In the Netherlands, the length of the formation period increased, to 3 months, but the average number of attempts decreased to 2.8¹.

The differences between the periods before and after 1965 suggest that there is a relationship between the length of government formation and the emergence of written coalition policy agreements, but no clear relationship between agreements and the number of formation attempts (an inverse relationship exists in the Netherlands). Here, it is important to recall the point made in chapter two, which was that a second, third or any additional formation attempt does not always imply failure and a new start and/or a change of parties. It may also be simply a next step in the formation process (and thus not a restart), made when preparatory activities led by an *informateur* are completed and a *formateur*, usually the prime minister designate, is appointed. Even the work of an *informateur* may be predefined. In Belgium this is typically done by a *mediateur* (De Meyer, 1983: 192).

We should not, however, give too much emphasis to the variable of government formation duration in relation to coalition agreements, as much of what seems to be a straightforward relationship may disappear if individual cases are considered. In Belgium and in the Netherlands, there have been government formations that were protracted but resulted in relatively brief coalition agreements, and conversely there have also been formations during which, in a relatively short time (less than two months), extensive documents were produced.

¹ As in chapter two, these figures are based on Strøm (1990), with additional information derived from Keesings Contemporary Archives.

The making of coalition agreements

Initially, the drafting of coalition agreements was largely the privilege of party leaders. In the early 1970s parliamentary area specialists or other party spokespersons increasingly became involved in the negotiations. In the Netherlands, those participating in policy bargaining are usually parliamentary leaders and members of the parliamentary groups.² In Belgium, the primary negotiators are the party presidents, accompanied by other party prominents or specialists from different sections of the parties. These may, but need not always be, parliamentary representatives. In early 1988, for instance, there were 15 top negotiators and 70 other party spokespersons in Belgium (De Ridder, 1989: 186-187).

The form of the negotiations is usually determined by the *informateur(s)* or *formateur(s)*, or in Belgium occasionally by a *mediateur*. If there are two or more formation attempts, there are often different ways of proceeding. Despite the fact that in the low countries government formation is fairly institutionalised, both the procedure and style of the (*in*)*formateur(s)* varies considerably from one government formation to the next. Initially, conflictual issues were identified first and when the parties had reached agreement on the agenda, these issues were dealt with sequentially. As the agenda became more substantive, and the number of issues increased, matters were dealt with more synchronously. This was made possible by setting up work groups, each dealing with one particular part of the agenda. Government formation accounts mentioned such work groups for the first time in the Netherlands in 1971, and in Belgium in 1972. More recently, the use of working-groups in the Netherlands has been combined with what is called a 'concentric approach' (1982, 1986, 1989). In this approach, party spokespersons begin by discussing general policy areas, and in a following round of talks, teams of negotiators focus on the really 'tough' issues.

Whatever approach is followed, the most important matters are usually dealt with by the party leaders themselves. These matters may be kept for the final round of negotiations, but sometimes they are dealt with first. In such cases, the issues are felt to be so important that reaching agreement is a condition for the viability of the coalition, and for further negotiations on other subjects; especially when specific issues caused the fall of the previous coalition, the parties tend to deal with these issues first, irrespective of the party composition of the new coalition (see tables 4.1 and 4.2). For example, in 1965, public broadcasting triggered the fall of a government of Christian Democrats and Liberals in the Netherlands, and the issue was given priority during the discussions for forming a new government. These discussions were broken off and restarted after the

² These party leaders are not always parliamentary leaders in the true sense: in the case of incumbent parties, it is usually the most prominent minister (for one party this is the prime minister) who leads the party in the elections, and subsequently becomes the first party spokesperson during government formation. In the Netherlands, outgoing ministers may have a seat in parliament for a maximum of three months.

Social Democrats left and the Liberals again took a place at the negotiation table. In Belgium, continuation of discussions on controversial issues during government formation is also the rule rather than the exception.

After the conclusion of negotiations, coalition agreements are submitted to the parties for approval. In the Netherlands, within some parties (CDA and PvdA), agreements are first submitted to the parliamentary groups of the coalition parties before they are discussed and voted on at a special party congress or by some other competent body. Within the VVD and D66, the extraparliamentary party plays a more limited role. This is different for all the parties in Belgium, where the usual procedure is that the extraparliamentary parties organise a congress or special conference for the discussion, so far followed by approval (if often not unanimous) of the coalition agreement. The texts of the agreement are usually available to individual members of the parliamentary groups, but there is no formal submission to these groups. The parliamentary groups at large enter the picture only in the official *investiture* of the new government in parliament, where they vote on the government declaration rather than on the coalition agreement.³

In both countries, the proportion of ministers who have been involved in the negotiations varies between one third and two thirds. In the Netherlands, parliamentary leaders often become a minister, though only in 1971 and 1981 was this the case within most parties that took office. Party presidents in Belgium, as the most prominent negotiators, have entered the government less often. In part this may be because in this country the office of party president is generally seen to be highly important.

General features of coalition agreements

Different coalition agreements have been produced by different party combinations, and the tendency towards more extensive and specific documents seems to be unrelated to any particular type of coalition or combination of parties. In 1963, the first coalition agreement in the Netherlands in the view of prime minister Marijnen 'was not a complete government programme' (Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1963: 70), but this changed in the 1970s. Actually the first joint programme which was also called a coalition agreement was issued in 1971. This was when work groups were introduced into the negotiations (Bovend'Eert, 1988). Since the early 1980s, coalition agreements have become longer and more detailed than government declarations, which are presented officially in parliament. The average length of agreements in the 1960s was some 3,500 words, which almost doubled to about 6,500 words in the 1970s and further increased to nearly 20,000 in the 1980s. The general characteristics of agreements in the Netherlands are given in table 4.1.

In Belgium, the agreements have become even longer in the same period,

³ In the Netherlands, new governments present a policy declaration in parliament, but no vote of confidence exists. Governments are considered implicitly to have the confidence of parliament as long as a vote of *no confidence* remains absent.

especially since the 1970s, when agreements had already reached a length of 12,500 words on average. As in the Netherlands, in the view of prime minister Harmel the first agreement (which was the 'appendix to the government declaration) was 'not intended to be an extensive and detailed inventory of problems at the level of individual ministries' (Parlementaire Handelingen Kamer, 29 July 1965). Another similarity with the Dutch case is that the term coalition agreement was first used in 1972. Since then, in Belgium, agreements have often been referred to as 'coalition bibles'. In the 1980s, the average length of agreements further increased to some 15,000 words, but this excludes the exceptionally long document issued in 1988, which contained nearly 40,000 words and was nicknamed 'the gospel according to John-Luke', after *informateur* Jean-Luc Deheane. Some general features of agreements in Belgium are presented in table 4.2.

The length of agreements alone, however, tells only part of the story. Another part is that coalition agreements have come to include explicit and implicit compromises on very diverse matters next to paragraphs incorporated to satisfy an increasing army of government formation lobbyists and the general public. A former Dutch *informateur* once noted that in the 1980s the formation files contained several thousands of letters and requests from interest groups and individuals.

When confining ourselves to the real policy conflicts in the period between 1965 and 1990, some 5 to 10 main issues can be found. Often, and especially with regard to language and community policy in Belgium and financial and socio-economic policy in both countries, these issues in turn contained different points of conflict which were all dealt with. For these debated points, separate explicit and implicit compromises were formulated. Typically, these compromises not only contained general statements, but often also mentioned dates and quantities. Sometimes, even complete blueprints for draft bills were incorporated, as for example in 1980 in Belgium with regard to regionalisation, and in the Netherlands in 1986 for new legislation on equality. Examples of subjects of interparty bargaining include the setting up of representative bodies for communities and regions (Belgium), the granting of facilities for linguistic minorities (Belgium), control of the budget deficit, cuts in departmental spending, stimulation of employment, the public and private (religious) school system, abortion, nuclear policy, expropriations policy (Netherlands), and the introduction of commercial television (Netherlands) (De Ridder & Fraga, 1986; Maas, 1982; Keesings Historisch Archief, 1982-1990).

The duration of coalition governments and the 'durability' of coalition agreements

In Belgium, alternations in the composition of coalitions have been more frequent than in the Netherlands. This is closely related to the shorter average duration of coalitions in Belgium. In the period 1945-1965, the average duration of governments (including caretaker governments) was 17 months in Belgium, against 27 months in the Netherlands.

In the period 1965-1990, it was 15 months in Belgium and 24 months in the Netherlands.⁴ As we have seen, in both countries the government formation process came to take more time and more attempts, but this clearly did not result in a longer average life for the governments. More frequently than in the past, however, Dutch governments lasted a full constitutional four year term, or nearly that term, in office. In contrast, in Belgium only two governments held office for the constitutional period of four years, but even these broke down before parliamentary elections were held.

The difference in duration between the two countries holds for all types of coalition governments (Laver & Schofield, 1990: 152-155). This means that the relative brevity of government life in Belgium is not only a matter of coalition attributes such as size (minimal winning versus minority and surplus majority) and party political composition, but must also be due to particular characteristics of the bargaining system which destabilise the coalitions once in office. The main structural explanation, and certainly the most common one among students of Belgian politics, is the manifestation of the language and community conflict as an extremely important policy dimension since the 1960s, which as we have seen also led to drastic changes in the Belgian party system. In the Netherlands, there is no one particular policy dimension next to socio-economic and financial policy that has had such a lasting impact on coalition politics.

In both countries, governments often end because of internal disputes over policy and they have this in common with other countries that are designated multipolar and that have relatively short lived governments. In Belgium breakdowns on policy have been relatively more frequent when considering the entire postwar period. In the Netherlands, it is since 1965 that internal policy conflicts have formed an important reason for the end of governments (Andeweg, 1988: 136). Such breakdowns have also occurred with 'the finish in sight' (after all, long lasting governments too may eventually break down!). In both countries, parties may thus not only be, as Warwick (1993: 19) has put it, be 'pulled' out of office by opportunities for alternative coalitions from which they receive higher payoffs, but often be, first of all, 'pushed' out of coalitions because of policy conflicts. It must be noted that in Belgium and the Netherlands these policy conflicts have not always concerned arrangements made during government formation.

The practice of formulating coalition agreements has thus not led to a longer average life for governments. Often, conflicts which triggered the fall of the coalition were over issues dealt with in the coalition agreement. Thus on average, the 'durability' of coalition agreements is limited.

While all this is true if we consider agreements and the life of governments in a general way, my specific point of interest is the impact of coalition agreements during the

⁴ As before, these figures are based on Strøm (1990) and additional information in Keesings Contemporary Archives.

life of governments. If an arrangement gives rise to new conflict which brings down the government, this is one effect (and of course an important one), but other arrangements may have different effects prior to such dramatic developments. It is only possible to say something about the effects of coalition agreements if the effects of all relevant arrangements are considered. These are the empirical questions that I deal with in the case studies.

Table 4.1

Governments and coalition agreements in the Netherlands (1963-1989)

government	duration (months)	party composition	duration formation (months)	length agreement (words)	main issues dealt with in government formation*
1963 Marijnen	19	KVP, ARP, CHU, VVD	2	3,600	children's benefits; income tax; housing programme; broadcasting
1965 Cals	18	KVP, ARP, PVDA	1.5	3,200	broadcasting; housing programme; real estate policy; taxes
1966 Zijlstra	caretaker government				
1967 De Jong	49	KVP, ARP, CHU, VVD	1.5	3,400	government expenditure; tax and income policy
1971 Biesheuvel I	13	KVP, ARP, CHU, VVD, DS'70	2	4,700	priorities in government expenditure; social benefits; legislation on works councils; abortion; electoral reform; legislation on games of chance
1972 Biesheuvel II	caretaker government				
1973 Den Uyl	46	PvdA, KVP, ARP, D66, PPR	5.5	no agreement	profit sharing; works councils; abortion; defence spending; real estate policy
1977 Van Agt I	41	CDA, VVD	7	8,000	real estate policy; abortion; works councils; profit sharing; subsidies for investments
1981 Van Agt II	8	CDA, PVDA, D66	3.5	14,500	government expenditure; employment plan; income and tax policy; investment regulation; nuclear power-stations; nuclear weapons; school reform
1982 Van Agt III	caretaker government				
1982 Lubbers I	43	CDA, VVD	1.5	18,800	government expenditure; budget deficit; income and tax policy; nuclear weapons; broadcasting; school reform; euthanasia; equal treatment
1986 Lubbers II	34	CDA, VVD	2	15,500	government expenditure; social security; broadcasting; euthanasia; equality issues; school reform
1989 Lubbers III	> 1990	CDA, PVDA	2	28,800	government expenditure; budget deficit; social benefits; employment policy; compulsory identification; equality issues; euthanasia; broadcasting

* issues in bold type face caused the fall of the preceding government

sources: Duynstee (1967); Maas (1982); Keesings Historisch Archief 1982-1990

Table 4.2

Governments and coalition agreements in Belgium (1966-1988)

government	duration (months)	party composition	duration formation (months)	length agreement (words)	main issues dealt with in government formation*
1966 Vanden Boeynants I	23	CVP,PSC,PVV,PLP	1	2,900	government expenditure; policy on language minorities
1968 Eyskens IV	41	CVP,PSC,PSB-BSP	4	6,500	status Catholic University of Louvain; policy on language minorities
1971 Eyskens V	10	CVP,PSC,PSB-BSP	2.5	12,000	state representation in industry; competences political bodies of language communities; status of Les Fourons; setting up of regional political bodies
1973 Leburton	12	CVP,PSC,PSB-BSP,PVV,PLP	2	19,500	composition, competences and financial resources of regional bodies; status of Les Fourons; subsidies for public and private schools; income policy; state intervention in industry; contraception; abortion
1974 Tindemans I	2	CVP,PSC,PVV,PLP	3	7,000	state intervention in industry; financial policy; energy policy; pluralistic school system; abortion; regional bodies
1974 Tindemans II	30	CVP,PSC,PVV,PRL,RW	0.5	(2,700)	enlargement coalition; additional agreement on regionalisation policy
1976 Tindemans III	internal split RW				
1977 Tindemans IV	caretaker government				
1977 Tindemans V	16	CVP,PSC,PSB-BSP,VU,DFD	1.5	12,600	composition, competences and financial resources regional bodies; composition, competences and finances of community bodies; status provinces; delimitation Brussels boundaries; social benefits; state intervention in industry
1978 Vanden Boeynants II	caretaker government				
1979 Martens I	9	CVP,PSC,PS,SP,DFD	3.5	14,000	regional and community bodies; Brussels boundaries; government expenditure; inflation control; employment policy
1980 Martens II	withdrawal DFD				
1980 Martens III	5	CVP,PSC,PS,SP,PVV,PRL	1.5	20,000	regional financial autonomy; Brussels boundaries; government expenditure; nuclear weapons

Table 4.2 (continued)

Governments and coalition agreements in Belgium

government	duration (months)	party composition	duration formation (months)	length agreement (words)	main issues dealt with in government formation*
1980 Martens IV	5	CVP, PSC, PS, SP	0.5	13,700	programme for economic recovery; incentives for industry; employment programme; social benefits; income policy
1981 Eyskens	45	caretaker government	3	6,800	'economic emergency programme': government expenditure; subsidies for steel industry; special powers for government to fight economic crisis
1981 Martens V	23	CVP, PSC, PVV, PRL	2.5	12,500	(continuation emergency programme) government expenditure; social benefits
1985 Martens VI	1990 >	caretaker government	5	40,000	status of Les Fourons; regionalisation programme; government expenditure; budget deficit; tax and income policy; abortion; nuclear power stations

* issues in bold type face caused the fall of the preceding government

Sources: De Ridder & Fraga (1986); Keesings Historisch Archief 1985-1990

SELECTION AND ORGANISATION OF THE CASE STUDIES

Selection of coalitions

An important point to keep in mind is that this study is not intended as a formal test of one particular theory. Rather, it is an investigation, having an explorative character, of the effects of policy arrangements and factors which possibly influence the enforcement of these arrangements. Focusing on two of the eight normal governments in the Netherlands in office between 1965 and 1990 and two of the fourteen governments in Belgium forms a problem if our intention is to generalise. At least to a certain degree, governments are 'unique'. Conclusions formed with reference to the selected coalitions will primarily regard these coalitions and cannot be taken as the truth about other coalition agreements in Belgium and the Netherlands, let alone coalition systems in general.

Moreover, such conclusions concern the outcomes of arrangements on policies which were seen as controversial during government formation, and this entails a specific focus on certain actions, and inactions, of governments, and excludes other matters. It is necessary however to try and achieve a situation where the cases chosen are not so extreme as to tell a story that is unlikely to apply in other cases. One way in which this may be done is by taking coalitions which lasted long enough that the elaboration and implementation of arrangements could be started up, for the translation of detailed compromises into pieces of legislation and their approval in parliament is something which takes time.

The first criterion of choice is, for this reason, that one of the two governments in each country must have run its constitutional term in office. If such a government is absent or cannot be selected for other reasons, the government to be selected must have approached at least the 'normal' (average) duration of governments in the country in the period 1965-1990. As stated, this was 24 months in the Netherlands and 15 months in Belgium. The next criterion of choice is that one government must be short lived, by each country's own standards, as such governments have been common in both countries.

Since it is my intention to consider coalition agreements with arrangements in several distinct policy areas, reflecting 'multidimensional' bargaining, another criterion of choice is that the cases include different policy dimensions, with coalition agreements reflecting substantive negotiations on different policy dimensions, which here may be operationalised as distinct fields of policy. Notwithstanding the points made about the symbolic value of parts of extensive agreements, comprehensive agreements also often contain many more or less substantive compromises on key issues in different policy fields. Conversely, as we saw in the previous section, short agreements also often have a relatively limited scope, which was the situation in the 1960s but also occurred in later

years. In 1973, no real coalition agreement was reached in the Netherlands, while in Belgium negotiations had a limited scope 1981 and in 1985. This third criterion thus leads to a more limited set of cases for each country.⁵

Finally, the fourth criterion is the number of parties that are assumed to be relevant for enforcement. In chapter three, a distinction has been made between two party and multiparty coalitions. There is however a problem in that all relevant coalitions in Belgium have contained more than two parties, so that this criterion can only be used in the Netherlands, where several two party coalitions emerged after the CDA was formed in 1980. This means that I will consider one two party and three multiparty coalitions. A point to appreciate in this respect is that the number of parties is assumed to relate to outcomes of arrangements, and not to the duration of governments. I do not anticipate such a link in the selection of cases.

Following these criteria, I have chosen the Leburton (1973-74) and the Tindemans V (1977-78) governments of Belgium, and the Van Agt II (1981-82) and the Lubbers I (1982-86) governments in the Netherlands. These cases cover the entire period, with the Dutch coalitions following after the coalitions in Belgium. The Leburton government was a 'grand coalition' composed of the three traditional party families (Christian Democrats, Socialists and Liberals). Only the Socialists were still officially a unitary party. This government was relatively short lived, as it lasted 12 months, so less than the average for the relevant period in Belgium. The Tindemans V government also controlled more than a simple majority in parliament as next to the Christian Democrats and the Socialists it contained two regionalist parties, the Flemish People's Union (VU) and the Democratic Front of Francophones (FDF) which had Brussels as its electoral base. This government remained in office for 16 months, which is 'normal' for a Belgian coalition in the relevant period. In the Netherlands, the Van Agt II government contained three parties, the CDA, PvdA and D66, and was the most short lived government of those chosen, with a life of only 8 months (this even was a postwar record, disregarding caretaker governments). The Lubbers I government forms a contrast in this respect, as this two party coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals completed its constitutional term in office. The general features of these four governments will be discussed further in the respective chapters.

⁵ It must be noted that the two Belgian governments which were in office between 1981 and 1987 are interesting cases precisely *because* the coalition agreements were mainly on financial/budgetary and economic policy. The fact that the parties were able to place and keep the language and community problem on a backburner for six years is remarkable. They did so not through bargaining on the problem but by removing it entirely from the agenda even before actually conducting policy negotiations in which absolute priority was given to financial and economic policy. This formed the *raison d'être* of the Catholic Liberal coalitions. This 'peace' lasted until the summer of 1987, when the language issue again came at the surface and triggered the fall of the government a few months later. Though this falls outside the scope of this study in which we only deal with written arrangements, it is an interesting example of a relatively successful cease fire on the community problem in Belgium.

Figure 4.1 summarises the criteria and the four selected cases.

Figure 4.1
Selected cases from Belgium and the Netherlands
(1970-1990)

	Belgium	Netherlands
	multiparty	twoparty
short duration	Leburton (1973-74)	Van Agt II (1981-82)
at least 'normal' duration	Tindemans V (1977-78)	Lubbers I (1982-86)

Organisation of the case studies

Each case study is built up in similar way, containing an introduction, a section on conflicts and arrangements, one on the outcomes of arrangements, a section devoted to factors which may explain success and failure, and a conclusion.

The units of analysis

The units of analysis in the case studies are coalition agreements, or at least the relevant parts. Individual arrangements in the agreement are the subunits of analysis. Coalitional and government structures form the relevant context, which will be taken into account in each of the case studies, most clearly through the assumptions about the impact of characteristics of coalitions and their composite parts on the enforcement of arrangements.

Operational definitions

As the focus in this study is on manifest conflicts and explicit and implicit compromises, it is important to be precise about what I see as separate conflicts and what as compromises. The adjective 'manifest' in relation to conflicts is very important, as only these conflicts will be dealt with. In both countries, there is usually sufficient information about government formation to know what have been the central issues and conflicts during government formation.

These key issues in turn may contain different points of conflict. The community problem for example may contain different elements, which may also be dealt with separately, in sequence or simultaneously during the negotiations. Another example is retrenchment policy. Conflict on the size of the budget deficit, the distribution of cutbacks between spending areas or ministries, and on the way to realise cuts within one particular

area may be treated as separate conflicts, and the compromises made on these matters may be considered to be separate explicit and/or implicit compromises. Generally, the two extremes seem to be a package of intentions in different areas which are together called a compromise, and one individual and more or less 'doable' statement. In the present context, policy conflicts are defined at an intermediate level, and regard individual issues or clearly separable elements of issues on which explicit or implicit compromises are made. This is not to say that these elements, or even issues, have always been completely unrelated in bargaining, but rather that their outcomes may be examined separately without violating the empirical reality that we are investigating. The consequence of this is that the number of explicit and implicit compromises will often be larger than the number of issues that were central during government formation.

Another point to stress is that by implementation of arrangements I understand that these were carried out or observed (in the case of procedural arrangements) or translated into substantive policy decisions (in the case of explicit compromises or general implicit compromises). An additional condition is that these decisions were approved within the formal decision making institutions. The implementation of arrangements announcing legislation may for example mean that a draft bill is only formulated and submitted in parliament (if this is what the arrangement says), but it may also mean that a bill is submitted and approved in parliament during the government's term in office.

5

The Leburton Coalition (1973-1974)

A FIVE PARTY COALITION

Interparty negotiations on a new government were started in November 1972. After the fall of the previous Eyskens V government, a coalition of Christian Democrats and Socialists, no new parliamentary elections were called (these had been held one year before, in November 1971). The Eyskens IV government had broken down on institutional reform, this being highly salient politically after the revision of the constitution in December 1970. This revision made the forming of cultural groups and regions possible within Belgium. Contentious issues during the previous government included facilities for French speakers in the area of Fourons (Voeren) at the Flemish side of the language border, the competence of the cultural councils, representing the communities of French speakers and Dutch speakers, and the forming of separate regions on the basis of article *107 quater* of the constitution, with the delimitation of the boundaries of Brussels, the third region next to Flanders and Wallonia, being most controversial. The task the Eyskens V government undertook to solve was the elaboration of this article *107 quater*. This proved to be a political minefield that the government was unable to survive. This made the parties involved realise that the only way left to carry out institutional reform was to form a 'national' coalition containing all three traditional party families. Such a coalition would have a two thirds majority¹, this being required for particular decisions on regionalisation on the basis of article *107 quater*. Additionally, a simple majority was needed within each of the two language groups in the Chamber of Representatives. The winning criterion thus was not a simple majority but a qualified majority.

This numerical requirement did not however imply automatically that the three party families buried all their disagreements. The last time Socialists and Liberals were in office together (and without the CVP and PSC) was between 1954 and 1958. Government formation started with the formulation of a basic document on institutional reform (over which the previous government had broken down), to be presented to all the parties. This was to lead

¹ The CVP and PSC together had 67 seats, the PSB-BSP 61, and the PVV-PLP 34, with the Chamber of Representatives counting 212 seats.

to a 'proto-coalition' to facilitate the negotiations on policy.

The formation process

The starting point of the formation process was thus the negotiations on regionalisation and institutional reform, carried out under the presidency of an *informateur* from the CVP, the largest party which had been instructed to form a new government. The discussions on this programme first were between the two incumbent party families, the Christian Democrats (which split into two separate parties in 1968) and the Socialists (which still formed one unitary party, be it with two language sections). The informateur carefully followed his instruction to focus on institutional reform, which evoked the reaction from the Socialists that there should also be a substantive programme on socio-economic policy. The CVP and PSC in turn demanded attention for school policy, about which the party families had also divergent preferences.

After three weeks, the informateur was succeeded by a *formateur*, the French speaking Socialist Edmond Leburton. The Liberals now joined the discussions, which were however delayed because conflict existed over the position of Leburton. The Flemish Catholics were not ready to accept that this monolingual French speaker would be the new prime minister. After the Socialists had put the CVP under heavy pressure to accept this candidate ('accept Leburton or there will be new elections'), the CVP gave way, and it was only after this conflict was settled that the discussions on policy could proceed. With respect to regionalisation and institutional reform, the key issues were the status of the Voer area on the language border, the elaboration of article 107 *quater*, and the tasks of the cultural councils. Other controversial issues placed on the formation agenda were economic policy, school policy, contraception and abortion.

To streamline the discussions and enhance the chances of substantive agreement, special work groups were established. These working-groups dealt with particular fields of policy and consisted of party delegations in which the party presidents were accompanied by parliamentary specialists. The delegations of the CVP and PSC also contained the party secretaries. Negotiations within the work groups were far from easy. Yet, arrangements were formulated on all major issues. After the work groups had presented their results, several sessions involving all negotiators were held. The parliamentary groups were consulted, but their role was little more than rubberstamping the results. On 19 January 1973, the coalition agreement was signed by the party presidents.

When the coalition agreement was discussed within the parties, support appeared to be anything but unanimous. There were considerable differences between the parties. The most positive were the PSC (94 % yes votes) and the Flemish Liberals (93 %), whereas the CVP and the PLP approved the coalition agreement with a much narrower majority of 60 %

(the party president of the PLP even voted against). The congress of the PSB-BSP was least enthusiast about the agreement; only 57 % gave their support (support within the the Dutch speaking wing, the BSP, was only 53 %). Thus, within the two largest party families, considerable dissension about the coalition agreement existed.

The final stage in the formation process was the distribution of portfolios, which in Belgium is not only a matter of dealing with party preferences, in this case the preferences of five parties, but also with the regional background of candidates and especially with language. Since 1970, the Belgian constitution requires that cabinets are composed of an equal number of French speaking and Dutch speaking ministers, to give *language parity*. Given these different criteria, it is not surprising that a large government ensued, containing not less than 22 ministers and 14 state secretaries.² On 26 January 1973, after two months of negotiations, the Leburton government was sworn in. A few days later, the government passed the parliamentary investiture.

General features of the coalition agreement

The coalition agreement had an unprecedented length of some 19,500 words and was the first to deal with all major fields of policy. The document contained 18 different sections, in which intentions on such different matters as school policy, subsidies to the steel industry, allowances for war victims, institutional reform, energy policy, and 'morality' issues were incorporated. CVP president Wilfried Martens commented that 'the agreement contains ideological points which were not previously included in a coalition agreement'. His counterpart from the Flemish Liberals also noted that 'the ethical and moral issues are not just mentioned but are really matters on which the parties have committed themselves' (De Standaard, 22 January 1973; Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers, 1973: 581).

The most sizable part of the document was on financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy. During government formation, however, this field was given less attention than other issues. More time was spent on issues within the field of language policy which had triggered the fall of the previous government. There was also a protocol which mentioned procedures for decision making on several important issues.

Despite the time spent on policy discussions and the more elaborate programme which ensued, party spokespersons said that it was the vagueness of the arrangements that persuaded their party conferences to accept the coalition agreement, adding that they were not too optimistic about the government's chances of success (De Standaard, 27 and 29 December 1972). Before going into the outcomes, however, I will first look at what arrangements were

² On 23 October 1973, a reshuffle was made, in which some of the 22 ministers were replaced and 8 portfolios of state secretaries were abolished. The jurisdictions of some of the remaining ministers and state secretaries were extended.

made during the government formation process.

CONFLICTS, ARRANGEMENTS, AND POLICY MAKING

From policy conflicts to arrangements

The government formation agenda consisted of rather diverse subjects. To begin with, several problems were 'inherited' from the previous government (De Ridder & Fraga, 1986: 386). That government had broken down on the issues of facilities for French speakers in the area of Voeren (Fourons) on the Flemish side of the language border, the competence of the cultural councils representing the communities of French speakers and Dutch speakers, and the forming of separate regions on the basis of article *107 quater* of the constitution. The delineation of the boundaries of Brussels, which was to become the country's third region next to Flanders and Wallonia, was a source of intense conflict between the French speaking and Dutch speaking parties. These matters could not be ignored by a government formed to carry out institutional reforms. Another conflict in a different area was over the position of religious schools, which had divided the Catholics and Socialists sharply. Given that these party families were the first to conduct government formation talks, this issue could also not be ignored. Next, the issues of contraception and abortion were raised by the Liberals, who had high expectations from a coalition where the secular parties (Liberals and Socialists) would be in a majority position. Finally, the parties dealt with items of socio-economic policy, which received less attention than the other issues.

Language policy

Disagreement existed on the granting of facilities, especially educational, to the French speaking minority in the area of the Voer. This small area in the north east of the country consisted of six predominantly Dutch speaking municipalities in Flanders, containing a French speaking minority. These municipalities belonged traditionally to the Wallonian province of Liège, but in 1962 they were transferred to Flanders. Many residents in the Voer area however remained oriented strongly on the province and the city of Liège, and they had always opposed the transfer violently. The reverse situation existed in an area in the west of the country. The problem of the two areas on the language border, with the greater emphasis on the Voer area, had been on the agenda of successive governments, and had also contributed to the downfall of some of these, including the previous Eyskens V government.

The three traditional party families made an explicit compromise on the issue. It consisted of the granting of limited educational facilities to the language minorities in both

areas, and the conditions for setting up schools were also eased. The parties expected that by formulating this compromise they had really settled the dispute, so that they could concentrate further on regionalisation and community policy (Luykx, 1973: 591).

A second issue regarded language parity in the administration of Brussels. A law passed in 1963 stated that after 10 years (so by August 1973), language parity must exist at the top of the administrations of the 19 officially bilingual municipalities of Brussels. The provision was heavily contested by the French speaking parties from the beginning. Precisely because the parity principle benefited the Dutch speakers, the CVP and PVV referred to this law during government formation. In the coalition agreement, it was stated that the government would be competent to take special measures to ensure that language parity would indeed be realised by 1 September 1973. This was an explicit compromise with a zero sum character to the benefit of the Dutch speaking parties.

Regionalisation policy

In the constitutional revision of 1970, article 107 *quater* stated that there would be three regions in Belgium: Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. The two previous governments had foundered on the specification of the different articles of the constitution, which were often compromises. More specifically, the manifest points of conflict were the composition of representative bodies for the regions, the distribution of state subsidies between the regions, and the status of Brussels as the country's official third region. These points were dealt with extensively by the party delegations.

The regional bodies The CVP advocated 'cultural autonomy' for Flanders, which in the view of this party meant that the Flemish community and region should be one entity. This required a revision of the constitution. The other parties, and especially the French speaking ones, preferred that there should be separate representative bodies for the regions and communities. In the negotiations the CVP conceded on this point, the result being a postponement of the matter until after the term of the government (De Standaard, 5 January 1973).

The other points of discussion concerned the 'fleshing out' of several constitutional articles. First, the parties agreed on a procedural arrangement mentioning deadlines for the submission of a bill by the government. A special parliamentary committee would examine the different articles of the bill. This committee was to be set up shortly after the government took office, and was to report before 15 July 1973, six months after the government was installed. To ensure the existence of a 'link between parliament and the executive', ministers were expected to participate in the committee's meetings.³ If the committee did not come up

³ Unlike in the Netherlands, ministers in Belgium may (and often do) have a seat in parliament.

with substantive changes or counter proposals, the government's bill would be submitted officially in parliament. This was to be before 15 October 1973. In that case, the parliamentary groups of the coalition parties were supposed to be loyal when the bill was to be voted on.

More substantive intentions were included in what was called the 'scheme for the implementation of article 107 *quater* of the constitution'. This scheme contained the key elements for the bill referred to above and was binding, unless the coalition parties decided *unanimously* to modify it. The distinction made between a transitional and a definitive arrangement on representative and executive bodies was important. In the transitional stage, the Regional councils of Flanders and Wallonia were to be composed of 60 members, to be recruited from the provincial councils on the basis of proportional representation. The Brussels regional council was to be composed temporarily of the provincial councillors residing in the Brussels agglomeration. These arrangements were to last until the first parliamentary elections after 1 January 1977, the elections following after the end of the constitutional term of the government. These points together constituted an explicit compromise.

In the 'definitive' arrangement, which was to be enforced after elections in 1977, the regional councils would be composed of the provincial representatives with a reduction in the size of the provincial councils. The Brussels regional council was to adopt the functions of the existing Brussels agglomeration council. These points together also formed an explicit compromise. The commitments on Brussels entailed important concessions from the PSC, the party which was relatively strongly oriented to Brussels.

Next, another explicit compromise incorporated in the scheme for the implementation of article 107 *quater* was that the executive bodies (regional governments) of Flanders and Wallonia would be composed of 9 members, who were to be elected from within the regional councils on the basis of the majority system. Each province within the region was to be represented in this executive body. The Brussels executive body was to contain 5 members, two elected by the Dutch language group in the Brussels regional council, two by the French language group, and the chairman elected by the regional council as a whole (as the majority was French speaking, this post was likely to be obtained by someone from this group, though this was not stated explicitly). The arrangements for the three executive bodies were intended to be permanent; no distinction between transitional and definitive arrangements was made. The compromise entailed important concessions from the PSC and PLP (the parties with relatively strong electoral interests in Brussels), as these parties had demanded a two thirds majority of French speakers in the Brussels executive. It was still a compromise, because the Dutch speaking parties had demanded complete language parity (De Standaard, 10 and 15

January 1973).⁴ The agreement also contained an 'escape clause' to apply in case of political problems. This stated that if the forming of the Brussels regional council, and thus of the language groups which were to be its constituent parts, proved to be impossible for political reasons, the Brussels executive would be elected by the French speaking and Dutch speaking groups of the existing Brussels agglomeration council.

Regional finances Another point of conflict was the distribution of the financial resources provided by the central government to the three regions. The specific point of contention was the set of distribution criteria. If population size was taken as the main criterion, Flanders would take the biggest share, whereas the criterion of area size would benefit Wallonia, the larger region.

An explicit compromise was made, which stated that one third of the subsidies would be related to population size, one third to area size, and one third to the average revenues from income tax in the last three years. These criteria were to be included in the bill on regionalisation (see above). This set of criteria, however, would be used only after three years, when the regional bodies took on a more permanent character. For the short term an explicit compromise was made, containing a distribution 50 percent for Flanders, 40 percent for Wallonia, and 10 percent for Brussels.

Brussels: problems of territory The third and most complex problem was delineating the boundaries of Brussels as the third region. Here, the lines of conflict also cut across the three traditional party families, and more between French and Dutch speakers than between Flamings and Wallonians. Brussels is a largely French speaking city located within the Flemish region. The expansion of Brussels therefore implied a greater influence of French speakers in Flanders. In the perception of the French speaking Brusselers, there was a Flemish *carcan* (iron collar) around the city which hindered its 'natural' expansion beyond the 19 municipalities which thusfar constituted the capital city Brussels. To the Flemish, Brussels was an 'oil stain' which should be contained.

A procedural arrangement was made in which the issue was referred to the special parliamentary committee (which as said was to report to the government before 15 July 1973). The parties also formulated an 'insurance' arrangement, which stipulated that in the case that the parliamentary committee was unable to agree, the Brussels region would coincide with the existing boundaries of the agglomeration (the capital city Brussels). This arrangement was a major concession from the PSC and PLP.

Next, the Dutch speaking parties advocated the splitting up of the single Brussels electoral district into two separate districts. This would strengthen the electoral basis of their

⁴ Article 108 *ter* of the constitution said that in the executive of the Brussels *agglomeration*, language parity was required. The present compromise, however, was for the executive of the Brussels *region*. This may illustrate the complexity of the issue.

(Dutch speaking) candidates, and conversely reduce the influence of the French speakers. This was the reason why the French speaking parties (in particular the PSC) rejected this suggestion. The parties agreed implicitly on this point by writing down that such a division would be considered only as part of a general electoral reform. The government would submit a bill 'to simplify and harmonise the different electoral laws'.

School policy

School policy has traditionally divided the Catholics and secular parties. In the 1950s, the granting of state subsidies to private religious schools was high on the political agenda. After two successive governments, one a CVP-PSC singleparty government and the next a coalition of Socialists and Liberals, had pursued rather different policies in this area, a *national school pact* was signed by the three traditional party families in 1958. The pact meant the official recognition of private next to public schools, including a system of subsidies for both types of schools. It became increasingly clear however that the school pact had not entirely resolved conflict, as the Catholics came to feel that private schools were deprived of sufficient financial resources and were also discriminated against in this respect. Because of this, the CVP-PSC again placed school policy on the agenda.

New negotiations were to lead to a revision of the school pact, to be prepared by a new *national school pact committee*. This committee was to be composed of ministers, members of the parliamentary groups, and the presidents of the traditional parties. As such, it was a committee which cut across the boundaries of the formal decision making bodies. The CVP and PSC demanded that the school pact of 1958 be 'stretched up' as much as possible, while the Socialists especially, advocated minimal changes, certainly if these would involve higher spending on private schools.

The parties reached agreement on a number of arrangements which were mostly explicit compromises. First, it was agreed that wages of clerical teachers would be increased. The CVP had demanded the abolishment of all (perceived) discriminations against religious teachers compared with teachers at lay schools. The compromise stipulated that wages of religious teachers 'not living in a religious community' would be increased to a level equal to the wages of officially licenced teachers. For those teaching at primary or nursery schools and living in a religious community, a term which was left unspecified in the text, wages were fixed at 60 percent, increasing to 70 percent of the normal wage after 15 years of duty. With regard to secondary schools, the school pact provisions of 1958 remained valid, which meant that religious teachers would obtain the minimum wage, with an increase of 15 percent after 15 years.

Next, arrangements were made with regard to the size of different funds for public and private school construction and modernisation. A general plan on school construction was to be elaborated within six months by the government. The contents of this plan were left open. The size of a new general fund for school construction also was left undecided. Both

arrangements were thus implicit compromises. More clear commitments were made on a fund benefiting public schools, which would consist of annual grants of 3 billion Bfrs., to be supplied by the national government over a period of ten years. A procedural arrangement on financial resources in the long run stated that the *national school pact committee* was to make a 'technical study' of the funds required in the long term, the results of which were to be presented before 30 June 1973. Further, a fund would be set up for annual credits for private schools. The CVP and PSC had demanded 5 billion per year, but the result of negotiations was an implicit compromise in which a largely symbolic amount of 180 million was mentioned, to 'underline that the parties have committed themselves' to create a real fund for private schools. On this matter too, the school pact committee was to elaborate on the coalition agreement before 30 June 1973. Finally, there was an explicit compromise on the conditions for the repayment of loans contracted by private schools. Such loans were to be repaid within forty years, and the interest percentage would be that of the capital market minus 1.25 percent.

Socio-economic policy

Though in the negotiations priority was given to regionalisation and school policy, manifest differences on socio-economic policy existed which were subsequently dealt with. First, the parties disagreed on pensions for the coming years. The Liberals demanded a general increase in pensions, but the Socialists opposed such an increase if other sources of incomes, especially social benefits, were not increased. An explicit compromise was made on the issue, which announced that after a transitional period of three years, pensions (of employees) would become 75 percent for families or 60 percent for singles of the average wage in the private sector. Pensions for the self employed would be increased each year, to begin in January 1973.

Another issue was state intervention in the economy, in particular in industry. In the previous government, state activities had expanded, something which the Liberals were against during government formation, demanding a more limited role of the central government in this field of policy. Once at the bargaining table, the PVV and PLP asked for clarification about rumours of a secret agreement between the PSB and the Iranian state oil company (NIOC) on a large oil refinery project in the province of Liège, a troubled industrial area. The central question was whether or not the outgoing government had committed itself on this issue, something which in the eyes of the Liberals violated the conventional norm that controversial decisions are not taken when a government has caretaker status. The parties agreed implicitly on the issue. In the coalition agreement, it was stated that the government would be 'selective' in initiating or stimulating economic activities, and would focus on those specific industries where initiatives were not being taken by the private sector. Such industries were to become public organisations. With regard to the oil refinery project, the agreement said that the government would await the results of the study.

Ethical questions: contraception and abortion

Two final controversial matters were the 'morality' issues of contraception and abortion. Both issues were placed on the agenda by the Liberals, with support from the Socialists. With regard to contraception, the negotiators of the CVP and PSC were prepared to concede. An explicit compromise was made, which announced that the government would issue legislation to provide free contraceptives. This legislation was to be approved before the end of the government's term in office.

On abortion, however, agreement appeared more difficult to reach. Abortion was prohibited, with the two Catholic parties preferring to maintain the status quo. The Socialists and Liberals on the other hand argued strongly in favour of a more liberal policy on abortion, to take it out of the sphere of criminal law. The parties only agreed implicitly on the issue. Existing legislation on abortion would be revised before the end of the government, but the way in which this was to be done was left open.

Table 5.1 summarises the types of arrangements made on issues in the relevant fields of policy.

Table 5.1
Arrangements in Leburton coalition agreement

policy field	type of arrangement			
	explicit	procedural	general	
language policy	2	-	-	2
regionalisation policy	7	3	1	11
socio-economic policy	1	-	1	2
school policy	3	1	3	7
ethical questions	1	-	1	2
(total = 24)	14	4	6	24

Arrangements and policy making

Given the hypotheses, the presence of explicit compromises in the areas of school policy, language and regionalisation policy should lead to more successes in these areas than in other areas, especially in terms of conflict prevention. Was this the actual outcome? In this section I consider the outcomes in terms of conflict and implementation.

Socio-economic policy

The explicit compromise on pensions was implemented without problems. A bill containing an increase in pensions of employees by 8 percent and, for subsequent years, the linkage of pensions to the economic trend was submitted to parliament and approved in March 1973 (Luykx, 1973: 596). A bill on pensions for the self employed was also submitted in parliament and approved without delay. The first responsible minister (a Liberal) declared enthusiastically that he was 'proud to have realised the relevant intentions in the coalition agreement' (De Standaard, 24/25 March and 16/17 June 1973).

A 'terminal' event: the IBRAMCO project With regard to the issue of state intervention in industry, the parties had formulated only general statements. On the specific issue of the oil refinery project near Liège it was stated that no decisions would be taken until the results of a study on the profitability of the refinery were known. The Liberals were even assured that no further steps had been taken. Shortly after the government had taken office, it became clear that, during the term of the previous government, the PSB-BSP and the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) had started preparations for building an oil refinery in the province of Liège (Wallonia), under the name IBRAMCO (Iranian Belgian Refining and Marketing Company). Within this organisation, the PSB-BSP controlled the Belgian seats on the board of directors.

The relevant paragraph in the coalition agreement was discussed at length within the government as well as in parliament. In May 1973, a motion was adopted in the Chamber of Representatives, saying that the government was committed to the agreement and was to communicate its precise intentions before 12 June 1973 (KHA, 1973: 321-322). On that date, the government did indeed make a statement on the issue, but it refused to go into the most delicate points. In October, prime minister Leburton emphasised that no decision would be taken before the study on the project was completed (KHA, 1973: 704).

At the same time, the consequences of the first oil crisis began to be felt in Belgium. In the view of the Socialists, the decline of heavy industry in Wallonia was an argument for the building of the refinery. The problem however was that Belgium was not the only possible partner in the project, and this was a reason for the NIOC to set a deadline of 15 January 1974. The CVP and PVV and PLP maintained their reservations against the project. On 16 January, one day after the deadline had passed, a compromise was reached within the cabinet. The NIOC however, withdrew from the project, and when this withdrawal was confirmed, the ministers of the PSB-BSP resigned. On 19 January 1974, the prime minister tendered the resignation of the whole government (KHA, 1974: 56-57).

School Policy

On 28 February 1973, a protocol committing the parties to revise the school pact was signed by the *national school pact committee*. The committee was divided into four work groups

which were to report on 20 June 1973 (De Standaard, 1 and 27 March, 10 May 1973; Luykx, 1973: 601).

Religious communities In June, conflict broke out within the government on the interpretation of the phrase 'religious teachers living in a community', which was left unspecified in the coalition agreement. In the view of the Socialists, a religious community consisted of 3 members, but the CVP and PSC argued that the minimum was 9 members, which would mean that fewer teachers would fall into the special wage regime for religious teachers, and receive only a certain percentage of the wages of lay teachers in public schools. Agreement could only be re-established after painstaking negotiations. The government fixed the size of religious communities at 6 members; the difference was thus split (De Standaard, 7-27 June 1973).

School funds: who gets what, how and when? Conflict also resurfaced when the different implicit compromises on school funds were elaborated. According to the PVV, the state school fund (3 billion Bfrs. annually) was to be used only for the modernisation of *existing* state schools. For the construction of *new* state schools, the general fund for school construction of both public and private schools was to be used. This interpretation meant that claims on the general fund would increase. CVP president Martens rejected this interpretation, as in his view the consequence was that this would leave less financial means for the construction and modernisation of religious schools.

Preferences also differed on the size of the other funds. Substantive compromises were reached after extensive discussions in the school pact committee as well as within the government. First, the fund for private schools was fixed at 3 billion a year. The conditions for credit remained those mentioned in the coalition agreement. This fund and the general fund for school construction would be placed under the supervision of a special ministerial committee presided over by vice prime minister Leo Tindemans (CVP) until the end of 1973.

Meanwhile, the school pact committee was to carry on which the elaboration of a general plan, on which the parties had only committed themselves to conclude discussions before July 1973. This was postponed until 1 January 1974, and if on that date the plan was still not completed, all funds would be blocked until presentation of the plan (De Standaard, 27 June 1973; Luykx, 1973: 602-603).

These points were all elements of a new bill, which was approved in parliament in early July 1973. Only the general school plan continued to divide the parties, which led to another postponement until 31 March 1974 (De Standaard, 12 December 1973). Discussions on the plan were suspended when the government fell in January 1974. Still, in this field, the outcomes of the implementation process may be called a success, be it more in terms of implementation than in terms of conflict prevention.

Language policy

The expectation that the compromise on the Voer and Comines enclaves was a workable one turned out to be largely correct. In the spring of 1973, the points mentioned in the compromise were implemented, and in early May, a new governmental decree took effect (KHA, 1973: 571).

In April 1973, the government submitted a bill to parliament containing special competences for the minister of Internal Affairs to accomplish language parity in each of the 19 officially bilingual municipalities of Brussels (in most of these municipalities, the vast majority of the population was French speaking). Though the PSC and PLP had great difficulties with this bill, as with any policy based on the parity principle applied in Brussels, the bill was nonetheless approved in parliament in June, and parity was accomplished as agreed over in the following months (De Standaard, 25 and 28/29 April 1973; 1973: 605-606). Thus, at least on these issues, the coalition agreement was instrumental to policy making and the prevention of conflict.

Regionalisation policy

What was the outcome of arrangements in the area of regionalisation, given that the government lasted only one year? A point that needs to be realised here is that what we consider in retrospective was not all foreseen by the parties themselves. Even if the premature end of the coalition is likely to have been related to developments in other areas (in that this may have decreased the willingness of parties to accept concessions or losses on issues, up to a certain critical point), the end of the coalition is likely to have been anticipated only shortly before the government fell. Another point to remember is that several intentions had a shorter time horizon, such as the procedural arrangements mentioning deadlines (July, September, and October 1973).

The regional bodies The coalition agreement contained a commitment to refrain from initiating a constitutional revision. This element in the agreement was observed, as no proposals in this direction were made. Another procedural arrangement which was carried out was the setting up of a special parliamentary committee on regionalisation, in which members of the parliamentary groups took a seat, including the presidents of all coalition parties except the CVP and the PSC. Spokespersons from the Democratic Front of Francophones (FDF) and the Walloon Rally (RW) were also invited to be present, without however participating actively in the discussions.

The committee had four months to advise the government on what in the coalition agreement was called the 'scheme for the implementation of article 107 *quater*' as 15 July 1973 was the deadline mentioned in the agreement. Despite the frequent meetings of the committee, no agreement could be reached on an alternative for the scheme mentioned in the coalition agreement (Luykx, 1978: 650).

Thus, the government now had to translate the points in the regionalisation scheme into legislation. This, of course, implied that there was to be agreement within the coalition also on the points that were left unspecified during government formation. In July, conflict broke out on the composition of the regional councils during what was called the definitive stage of regionalisation (after the parliamentary elections in 1977). The consequence of this conflict was that little progress was made in the drafting of the legislation, which according to the coalition agreement was to be ready by mid October 1973. In October and November, several proposals were made and discussed, but differences between the parties were not removed (Luykx, 1978: 650; KHA, 1973: 703-704).

Discussions on the regional executive bodies also involved conflict, despite the explicit compromises which had been made on them. The composition of the Brussels executive especially appeared to divide the parties. This was a direct consequence of the earlier conflict on the Brussels regional *council* (De Standaard, 12 December 1973; Luykx, 1978: 650).

At the end of the year, the government gave 15 January 1974 as the new date for the submission of the bill on regionalisation (the coalition agreement mentioned October 1973). Due to lasting conflict, another postponement was inevitable, and the fall of the government meant that the issue had to be shelved until the next government formation.

Regional finances A very similar story can be told with respect to the issue of regional finances. In October 1973, prime minister Leburton was still declaring that the government would observe the coalition agreement on the point of the distribution ratio for financial resources provided by the central government (KHA, 1973: 704). When the arrangement was finally to be turned into legislation, however, the PSB and the PSC and PLP began to question the weighing of criteria mentioned in the compromise. Things were still undecided when the government fell.

The boundaries of Brussels The Brussels problem not only comprised political institutions but also, and indeed first of all, the delineating of the boundaries of the Brussels region. These were new problems, but there also was the problem of language, which had become salient in the 1960s. The parties had made several arrangements during government formation on these matters, mostly of the implicit type.

The special parliamentary committee working on regionalisation was unable to find a solution to the geographical aspects of the Brussels problem. This meant that the status quo (Brussels boundaries coinciding with the agglomeration of 19 municipalities) would be maintained. The PSC and PLP however, were no longer prepared to support this arrangement, and the consequence was a deadlock within the government which still existed when the government fell. On the issue of the Brussels electoral district, agreement was also to be (re-) established by the parties engaging in the formation of a new government.

Contraception and abortion

With regard to contraception, the coalition agreement stated that the government would draft legislation containing measures to liberalise the supply of contraceptives. In June 1973, such a bill was drafted by the cabinet committee on ethical problems. The bill was approved in parliament just before the summer break (De Standaard, 29 June and 6 July). Thus, the explicit compromise in the coalition agreement on this issue was carried out without giving rise to new political problems.

Things were different with respect to abortion, which was placed on the agenda but was further left undecided. In February 1973, the presidents of the CVP and PSC declared that their parties would accept abortion only on strictly defined medical grounds (De Standaard, 1 March 1973). Somewhat later, the Liberal minister of Justice completed a first draft, in which abortion was allowed under several strict conditions. This first draft was discussed in the ministerial committee for ethical problems, and would be submitted in parliament only if all coalition parties really agreed to do so (De Standaard, 23/24 June and 5 July 1973). When the draft was discussed, the Socialists objected that the bill contained too many restrictions, and decided to introduce a private member's bill. This bill however received little support from the Liberals (De Standaard, 8, 14 and 19 November 1973). The result was that neither the government's draft nor the private member's bill were dealt with in parliament before the end of the government.

SUCCESSSES AND FAILURES OF THE LEBURTON COALITION

Explicit and implicit compromises were related to the hypotheses on the effects or outcomes of these types of arrangements. The first hypothesis was that explicit compromises, arrangements containing relatively clear cut and 'doable' intentions, streamline decision making within the coalition. The elaboration of general implicit compromises, however, was expected to be attended by conflict between the parties. Only procedural arrangements were expected to reduce conflict potential effectively on the relevant issues within the coalition. Table 5.2 presents the outcomes of the three types of arrangements, and also shows in which fields these outcomes occurred.

Table 5.2
Outcomes of arrangements in Leburton coalition agreement

Outcome	Type of arrangement			
	explicit	procedural	implicit-general	
elaborated/implemented (no conflict)	4 (lan,so-ec,eth)	2 (reg)	-	(6)
not elaborated/implemented (no conflict)	2 (reg)	-	-	(2)
elaborated/implemented (conflict)	3 (scho)	1 (scho)	2 (scho)	(6)
not elaborated/implemented (conflict)	5 (reg)	1 (reg)	4 (all)	(10)
	(14)	(4)	(6)	(24)
lan = language policy scho = school policy eth = ethical issues				
reg = regionalisation policy so-ec = socio-economic policy				

The streamlining effect of explicit compromises

Logically there were four possible outcomes of arrangements. One possible outcome was that explicit compromises were carried out without conflict. This happened with the two arrangements on language, the intention to accomplish language parity in the higher echelons of the Brussels administration and the compromise on facilities for language minorities on the language border, with the arrangement on pensions and with the intention to liberalise legislation on contraception.

Next, there were explicit compromises which did not provide a source of new conflict within the coalition but were not implemented. This was the outcome of two arrangements on regionalisation, the arrangement on the regional councils in the transitional stage and that on the regional executives of Flanders and Wallonia, which were turned into texts for the bill on regionalisation which could not be submitted due to the premature end of the government.

Third, three explicit compromises gave rise to inter-party conflict but nonetheless were implemented, an outcome which was typical of arrangements on school policy. The result was the submission of a bill on school policy and its subsequent approval in parliament, just before the summer break at the end of June 1973.

This forms a contrast to the outcomes of most arrangements on regionalisation, which appeared to generate rather than prevent conflict and were also not implemented. Especially with regard to Brussels, the coalition parties were in a permanent state of conflict, in which

the coalition agreement was used by the parties for their own purposes.

These findings provide only limited evidence for the hypothesis that explicit compromises are implemented peacefully. This was the outcome of only four of the fourteen explicit compromises. When considering the policy and conflict element separately, this type of arrangements appears to be more functional in terms of policy predefinition than in terms of conflict prevention.

The freezing effect of procedural arrangements

Procedural arrangements were most important in the area of regionalisation. One arrangement was meant to remove a point of controversy, a constitutional revision, from the agenda, which was also the actual outcome. Another procedural arrangement was more general and regarded the way in which regionalisation policy would be dealt with by the coalition parties (a special parliamentary committee would be formed to consider different aspects of regionalisation). Despite this arrangement being carried out immediately after the government took office, the parliamentary committee itself appeared to be unable to establish agreement on matters which were referred to it, such as delineating the boundaries of Brussels. Finally, with respect to school policy, a procedural arrangement in which certain matters were delegated to the school pact committee was carried out as it had been written down. In short, procedural arrangements made by the parties in the Leburton coalition were mostly implemented, though they actually functioned to prevent conflict in only two of the four cases.

The boomerang effect of general implicit compromises

The outcomes of implicit compromises of the general type were either implementation preceded by conflict, or conflict as the single outcome. This means that before anything else, general implicit compromises led to new conflict, which confirms the hypothesis. Two arrangements on school policy, relating to the general fund for school construction and the fund for private schools, were elaborated successfully by the government and the national school pact committee and turned into legislation in a relatively short time. In fact, the only important 'promise' on school policy that was not kept was the elaboration of a general school plan, which actually was scheduled for mid July 1973 and had to be deferred when the government fell in January 1974, and due to the fall of the government, the revision of the school pact also had to be left to the next government.

Conflict as the single outcome was also more typical of general implicit compromises, and emerged in different fields of policy. As well as the arrangement on the general school

plan mentioned just above, no decisions were taken on the Brussels electoral district and on abortion, on which two bills were proposed, both uncompleted and supported by only part of the coalition. Finally, conflict over state intervention in industry, which concentrated on the IBRAMCO issue, led to the fall of the government. These outcomes conform the expectation that general compromises are elaborated and implemented relatively less often than explicit compromises (1:3 against 1:2).

Why did the Socialists withdraw from the government? Here, it is important to consider the relative gains and losses the coalition parties made during the process of policy making. The PSB-BSP made important concessions on different matters (school policy and language policy), and this may have meant that the costs of remaining in office were expected to exceed the benefits, especially in the view of the powerful Wallonian Labour Federation. Another reason why the party withdrew from the government may have been that the regionalists, led by party president André Cools, feared electoral punishment in the future for implementing a regionalisation programme that did not enjoy the full support of the voters in Wallonia (remember that the coalition agreement was approved by a narrow majority within this party). The longer the government lasted, the more the voters were expected to be driven into the arms of the more radical *Rassemblement Wallon* (Rudd & Pijnenburg, 1988: 56-57). This may also explain why, after the resignation of the government, the PSB-BSP was the only traditional party pressing for elections.

Table 5.3 summarises the outcomes of all arrangements in terms of conflict and implementation. The relevant arrangements in the coalition agreement were clearly more functional in terms of policy delineation than in terms of conflict prevention (1:2, against 1:3). Policy delineation has however certainly not always been policy 'predetermination'. Sometimes, an issue was only placed on the coalition agenda, and substantive policy decisions followed only after further negotiations had taken place within the government or elsewhere. Other arrangements contained no substantive intentions but rather procedures for dealing with issues, or for *not* dealing with issues during the term of the government.

Table 5.3
Success and failure of the Leburton coalition

		implementation	
		+	-
conflict	-	6	2
	+	6	10

FACTORS EXPLAINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE

How can we explain the successes and failures of the Leburton coalition? A number of favourable and unfavourable conditions for success was discussed in chapter 4. These conditions concerned the coalition and its component parts as well as the broader economic environment. The underlying assumption was that parties seldom receive equal payoffs from individual arrangements and that arrangements are not self enforcing. Next to the moral principle that agreements must be honoured, enforcement was also seen in terms of mutual control, which may be weak or strong. The different factors were seen to strengthen or weaken these enforcement mechanisms and facilitate the implementation of arrangements.

An obvious but no less important point is that many arrangements in the Leburton coalition agreement were not implemented because the government fell long before the end of its constitutional term. Here, it is important to distinguish arrangements where the content had already been changed before the end of the government from arrangements which had not been changed or were not yet fully elaborated (or perhaps had not even been dealt with). Though the government fell after conflict on an issue which was dealt with in the coalition agreement, the relationship between the fall of the government and unimplemented arrangements in the second category is less direct, despite the fact the most of these arrangements had also given rise to conflict. As the aim of this section is to find which factors may help to explain outcomes, I will exclude the arrangements which, in this sense, are likely to have had 'ambiguous' outcomes (two explicit and three general implicit compromises, leaving 19 arrangements). Of the remaining 19 arrangements, 12 were elaborated and implemented successfully.

Table 5.4 shows whether or not each of the factors is associated with outcomes in the way that was assumed (predominant outcomes in each of the fields are given). A 'strong' association means that variables were associated in more than two thirds of the cases, while a 'weak' association stands for a relationship in less than half of the cases. These criteria of course are arbitrary, and it must also be realised that we are dealing with a small number of cases. The purpose of table 5.4 is just to indicate the associated variables.

There were two arrangements on language policy and two on socio-economic policy, one of which triggered the fall of the government. Since this was a dramatic case of failure, I consider this to be the predominant outcome in this field. The arrangements on language policy both were implemented. With regard to ethical questions, there were two arrangements, of which one, on contraceptives, was implemented successfully, and the one on abortion has been excluded from this part of the investigation.

Table 5.4
Association between factors and outcomes in the Leburton coalition⁵

factor	policy field				
	language	regionalisation	school	socio-economic	ethical
coalition size	o	o	o	o	o
internal party unity	o	--	+	o	+
negotiators in government	o	--	++	o	+
prime ministerial support	o	--	o	o	+
coalition committees	o	-	++	-	-
personal relationships	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
economic situation	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	-	n.a.

key to symbols:

++ or + direct association with success
 -- or - direct association with failure
 o no direct association found
 n.a. not assessed (no clear indication of presence or absence of factor)

The information in table 5.4 indicates that internal unity or disunity within parties and the presence or absence of negotiators in the government are associated relatively strongly with the outcome. Other factors are likely to have played a part, if at all, on a more *ad hoc* basis, though this need not mean that the factors were of only marginal importance. Let us consider each of the factors somewhat more closely.

Coalition size and reciprocal control

The assumption was that multiparty coalitions have more problems with enforcement than two party coalitions because there are fewer possibilities for reciprocal control. The impact of the number of parties however was not seen to be so strong that outcomes are total failure or total success. Instead, either success or failure was assumed to *prevail*.

In the case of the Leburton multiparty coalition, failure was not predominant, at least not if we use the frequency of types of outcomes as an indicator. 12 of the 19 arrangements were implemented. Does this mean that reciprocal control was strong, notwithstanding the presence of more than two parties? It is important to realise that the coalition was really successful only in the area of school policy. In other areas arrangements were implemented less often, or hardly at all. Perceived thus, reciprocal control seems to have played only a

⁵ See the appendix for more detailed findings on the Leburton coalition.

limited part as an enforcement mechanism, or perhaps more precisely: only up to a certain point in time.

Here, we may recall my basic assumption that parties mostly do not obtain equal payoffs from arrangements, though a certain balance will exist at the level of the coalition agreement as a whole. This situation was seen to form a disincentive to cooperate during the implementation of arrangements. In the case of the Leburton coalition, all parties expected payoffs from the set of arrangements in the government's first half year. The approval of legislation on school policy just before the summer recess in 1973, however, seems to have been a critical point. After this, the CVP became increasingly reluctant to cooperate on arrangements where, especially by a group within this party, fewer payoffs were expected and major concessions had been made during government formation. The consequence was that within the PSB-BSP in particular impatience grew about the realisation of intentions in other fields. For this party, the costs of remaining in office began to exceed the benefits, up to the critical point where the decision was made to withdraw from the government. Thus, problems with enforcement seem to have been due to differences in payoffs from individual arrangements and to the structure of the agenda and the general disbalance in the distribution of payoffs in the government's first half year.

The internal unity of coalition parties

An implicit assumption with respect to the previous factor was that parties are unitary actors in coalition politics. This may, however, have been less true in fields in which groups within the parties had manifest differences in policy preferences, especially if the groups were represented at the top of the party. In other words, internal unity or disunity of parties may have also influenced implementation positively or negatively.

A general indicator of intraparty divisions on policy can be found in the results of party votes on the coalition agreement. Within the two largest parties, the CVP and the PSB-BSP, support was 60 percent or less. The traditional 'divisions' within the CVP and PSC are those between the factions of labour, farmers, and the middle class, but at least with respect to the relevant parts of the coalition agreement, no major conflicts between these factions were found. What seems to have been more important was an division beginning to emerge between regionalists and unitarists within the CVP and the PSB-BSP. Within the CVP, Leo Tindemans, the vice prime minister, represented the unitarist group, while the leader of the regionalists (some called themselves 'Flemish federalists') was party president Wilfried Martens. The Socialists were not only divided along language lines, there was also a division *within* each language section, especially within the French speaking section where prime minister Edmund Leburton represented the *unitarists* and party president André Cools led the *regionalists*. Within the Liberal party family, divisions in the same field existed between the

Wallonian and the Brussels section (the leader of the Brussels wing of the PLP had voted against the coalition agreement).

The presence of divisions was mostly associated with failure (regionalisation), and absence of divisions with success (school policy), with the exception of the arrangements on language policy and the fall of the government as the most important outcome in the area of socio-economic policy. The factor of internal unity is likely to have made a difference when arrangements were on the coalitional agenda, though certainly not in all instances; especially with respect to failure in the field of regionalisation, it may be noted that the government contained many 'unitarists' (the prime minister, vice prime minister Tindemans), whereas in the extraparliamentary parties the regionalists were in a stronger position. This may also be a reason why no agreement could be reached in the special parliamentary committee, which contained representatives from different party sections.

Negotiators as ministers

One factor that was assumed to be a favourable condition for success was the presence of negotiators in the government, who could guard the implementation of arrangements and, given their background, interpret general arrangements more easily than outsiders. This may be seen to relate to enforcement as a moral principle, but more pragmatic motives may also play a part.

This factor appears to be associated with outcomes in the same way as the previous factor. The deviant cases are again success in the area of language policy and the failure of the IBRAMCO project, despite the activities of the minister of Economic Affairs (BSP), a former negotiator. The presence of negotiators in the area of education and the absence in the area of regionalisation may have contributed to success and failure, but the outcomes of processes in the areas of language and socio-economic policy must be due to other factors.

Prime ministerial support

Did the prime minister Leburton make a difference, either positively or negatively? Edmund Leburton was a monolingual French speaker, whose candidacy had been controversial. The consequence was that the authority of the prime minister was not accepted automatically by all parties, certainly not by the CVP. This reduced the prime minister's potential influence on policy making irrespective of his preferences and activities.

Prime ministerial support for the coalition agreement varied rather strongly between the different policy areas. Leburton seems to have pursued party policy actively only in the area of socio-economic policy (the IBRAMCO project), and that without success. Conversely,

the role of the prime minister seems to have been rather limited during the process of implementing arrangements on school policy, nor does it seem that success in the area of language policy can be attributed to active prime ministerial support. Leburton's passive role in the frequent conflicts on regionalisation policy seems to have been more related to outcomes. Leburton had always been suspicious of the arrangements in this area. These points lead to the conclusion that the role of the prime minister seems to have been confined to that of contributing to failure during the process of turning arrangements on regionalisation into legislation.

Coalition committees

Coalition committees have been seen to facilitate the elaboration and implementation of implicit and explicit compromises as alternative ('extrainstitutional') policy making arenas, and to be complementary to the factor of ministerial background. Coalition committees are defined as informal committees containing spokespersons from different sections of the coalition parties, thus not formed exclusively of ministers.

The Leburton government had been in office for one month when a *school pact committee* was set up to elaborate the arrangements on school policy and translate these into texts for a bill. The party presidents and the responsible ministers had seats in this committee, as well as spokespersons from other sections of the parties.⁶ In the case description we have seen that the school pact committee was active in elaborating arrangements and in settling recurrent conflict. Thus, together with other 'favourable' conditions (negotiators as ministers and no intra-party divisions), the committee factor is likely to have contributed to success in this field.

The *special parliamentary committee on regionalisation* was another coalition committee, in which (despite its name) not only members of the parliamentary groups but also ministers and party presidents (who, to be sure, in most cases had a seat in parliament) participated. Discussions within this committee however foundered over conflict, so that the government had to translate the arrangements on the regional institutions into legislative texts.

Thus, only in the area of school policy does a coalition committee seem to have contributed positively to the elaboration and implementation of arrangements. Other informal structures within and outside the government, if these existed, did not facilitate the enforcement of arrangements. As successes were reached in other areas in which no coalition agreements in the actual sense were operative, this case study suggests that this factor is not a necessary condition for success.

⁶ Though initially also members of the opposition parties were invited, the committee increasingly became a policy making arena for the coalition parties.

The economic situation

Next comes a factor that often is seen to encroach on the plans of decision makers, the economic situation. The oil crisis which became manifest in the autumn of 1973 increased the financial problems of the national government, but it also induced the Socialists to press harder for state initiatives in industry, the IBRAMCO project being an important political test case. With respect to this issue and to the arrangement on pensions, however, the economic situation does not appear to be related to outcomes as expected, because the arrangements on pensions were implemented while the IBRAMCO project failed. Rather than economic developments in general, it actually was an event emerging from the environment, the withdrawal of the Iranian government from the project, that caused the failure, which subsequently triggered the fall of the government.

Personal relationships

Finally, what can we say about the nature of personal relationships in relation to the enforcement of the coalition agreement? Though there was conflict on the candidacy of Edmund Leburton for the office of prime minister, no major personality clashes were manifest that might have formed an obstacle to the enforcement of the coalition agreement.

CONCLUSION

The coalition of three party families was formed to flesh out the constitutional articles on regionalisation, for which a two thirds majority in parliament was required. Though in theory this majority could also be formed on a more *ad hoc* basis, mistrust among the parties meant that issues of regionalisation were considered too delicate to be treated as free issues. This mistrust induced the parties to formulate explicit and implicit compromises on different aspects of regionalisation where conflict was manifest. Though we have not based our argument on the *a priori* assumption that large coalitions involve more policy conflict during government formation than smaller ones, such conflict was paramount during the formation of the Leburton coalition. Party preferences differed on school policy, on 'ethical questions', on socio-economic policy, as well on language policy and regionalisation. In the first field, the division was mainly between the Socialists and the Catholics. Conflict was more general in the two other fields. The coalition agreement of the Leburton government thus contained arrangements on socio-economic policy, ethical questions, school policy and on policy with

regard to the language communities and regionalisation. These arrangements were mostly explicit compromises (14 of the 24 arrangements). Implicit compromises were either procedural (4) or contained general intentions (6) which needed further specification.

The relevant parts of the agreement do not appear to have been really instrumental in preventing conflict on issues debated during government formation. Conform the hypothesis, general implicit compromises gave rise to conflict much more often than explicit compromises. The fall of the government after one year was also due to an issue over which the parties had only compromised implicitly, though certainly in this particular case the *type* of arrangement is not likely to have made the difference between success and failure.

The arrangements were only partly functional for policy making. This was to be expected of general implicit compromises and procedural arrangements (as these did not contain substantive intentions), but explicit compromises were expected to have more positive outcomes (50 percent were implemented). Generally, the relevant parts of the coalition agreement indicated rather than really predetermined coalition policy. Often, further negotiations were necessary before policies could be approved by the government and in parliament. What I have called failures (i.e., no formally approved policies) may be seen as part of a process which continued beyond the end of the government. Indeed, during the formation of the next government, the central issues were those left uncompleted or undecided by the Leburton coalition.⁷

The mixed outcome may be accounted for by different factors. The absence of manifest divisions within the parties and the presence of negotiators in the government are likely to have facilitated the enforcement of arrangements on the public and private school system, whereas in the area of regionalisation the presence of divisions and the absence of negotiators from the government seem to have been relevant as unfavourable conditions. The rather limited support of the prime minister may also have played a part. With respect to other fields, however, there are no indications that prime ministerial support or opposition, if manifest, made a real difference to outcomes. There is also no evidence of strained personal relationships contributing to failure.

Coalition committees seem to have played a part, in a positive way, only in the field of school policy. Though regionalisation was also dealt with in a coalition committee, discussions in this committee failed entirely, and subsequently policy making was shifted to the government (which also was unable to turn arrangements into uniform legislation). Further, economic developments did not appear to relate to outcome in the way assumed, but it was a 'critical event' from the international environment (the withdrawal of the Iranian government) which provided the immediate cause of failure in one field and led to the

⁷ See table 4.2 in chapter 4 for the issues which were central in successive government formations and those which brought down governments.

collapse of the government.

In conjunction with the above factors, reciprocal control as an enforcement mechanism seems to have been weakened, not so much by the multiparty character of the coalition as by the structure of the coalition agenda after the summer of 1973. Within the CVP, willingness to continue with the implementation of arrangements decreased after legislation on school policy and income policy was formally approved. This was especially so within the government section of this party, which like the other parties contained few negotiators in the field of regionalisation, while the unitarists were strongly represented. As it became clear that the coalition committee on regionalisation policy could not agree, the government became more important in the implementation process. The PSB-BSP, and especially the strong extraparliamentary party, became increasingly impatient about the implementation of arrangements on regionalisation and issues of socio-economic policy. When the Socialists lost on the IBRAMCO issue, new elections may well have been felt to be the only way to avoid further losses.

6

The Tindemans V Coalition (1977-1978)

A FIVE PARTY COALITION

Parliamentary elections were held on 17 April 1977. These elections were called after the dismissal of the Walloon Rally (RW), the Wallonian regional party, from the Tindemans IV government (CVP, PSC, PVV, PLP, RW) and the apparent impossibility of extending this government *en route* with the Socialists. The elections brought gains to the Catholic CVP and PSC, which together obtained 80 seats. The Liberals remained stable, and the RW went from 13 to 5 seats in the Chamber of Representatives. Thus this first case of government responsibility being held by a regionalist party was punished severely by the voters. The still officially unitary PSB-BSP, the main opposition party, gained a few seats, but this time was clearly smaller than the CVP and PSC combined. The largest regionalist party was the Flemish People's Union (VU), with 20 seats.

Given this pattern of numerical strength, the leaders of the two largest parties, CVP and PSB-BSP, declared that they wanted a new agreement on regional and community policy. This time, both had the intention of preparing a revision of the constitution, which then could be carried out in the next legislative term.¹ The parties involved in the discussions on the new agreement were expected to participate in that next government. According to the CVP, which would be the formateur's party, the Socialists were needed to be sure of a broad government majority including in Wallonia. This was necessary to have sufficient support (and shared responsibility) for the retrenchment policy, which was considered urgent. Perhaps even more importantly, Socialist support was indispensable to meet the requirement of a qualified and special majority for the approval of legislation based on constitutional article 107 *quater* on regionalisation.² As we saw, the Leburton coalition had made no progress on regionalisation, and the following governments led by Tindemans had not been able to

¹ For a constitutional revision, parliament must be *constituant*, which requires a special declaration by the outgoing government before the elections. The recently elected parliament was not *constituant*.

² That is, a two thirds majority in parliament and at the same time a simple majority in each of the two language groups.

complete the 'article 107 *quater* project'. The preference of the outgoing prime minister Leo Tindemans was a coalition within regionalist parties. Most parties however had a different view.

The formation process

A few days after the elections, CVP prominent Leo Tindemans received an instruction to form a new government. The most important first move in the process of coalition building was however made by the president of the PSB André Cools, who presented a 'questionnaire' to the Liberals to which this party was to respond within 24 hours. The actual intention of the Socialists was to remove the Liberals from the negotiation table, and the 'ultimatum' had this effect. As the CVP, PSC and PSB-BSP together had only a narrow two thirds majority, the Socialists preferred an additional party. Given the exit of the Liberals, this could only be a regionalist party. The problem with this was that the participation of *one* such party was against the wishes of the *formateur*, who actually wanted no regionalists in his new government, but was also questioned by the rest of the CVP and the French speaking wing of the Socialists, as in this case regional 'disbalance' would occur. In other words, *two* regionalist parties had to enter the government. The requirement of language parity in the cabinet was also relevant in this respect. This had formed a constitutional constraint on coalition formation since 1970.

The *formateur* made a procedural proposal to start with discussions on regionalisation policy, which were to result in a written agreement that was 'as specific as possible'. Tindemans also suggested that the VU and the Democratic Front of Francophones (FDF) should accept the agreement before really becoming the third and fourth coalition parties. Thus, as in the formation of the Leburton government, policy negotiations and the forming of the actual coalition did not take place in a fixed sequence of stages, but rather were mixed. Presentations in which government formation is seen to follow several stages are therefore not entirely realistic (Hearl, 1992: 415). Be this as it may, the dilemma for the *formateur* was that conducting negotiations on regionalisation *with* these parties would make an agreement more difficult to reach, whereas *without* them it was highly uncertain whether such an agreement would receive their support. Not surprisingly, the regionalist parties were very reluctant to make commitments under the conditions proposed by the *formateur*. The procedure on which eventually agreement was reached would be that the five parties would discuss the general points first, with negotiations on controversial matters following later.

Most of the discussions were held in plenary sessions but in utmost secrecy. Party delegations were composed of the party presidents and one or two parliamentary representatives. On several occasions, the spokespersons of the Flemish and Wallonian parties met separately. As in the formation of the Leburton coalition, the parliamentary groups were not involved

in bargaining; their role was largely confined to voting for (and approving) the formal investiture of the government.

The formation process took six weeks, of which only two and a half were actually spent on the coalition agreement, with most attention going to regionalisation policy. The coalition agreement was approved at the party conferences at the end of May. Support varied considerably, though not as much as in the case of the Leburton coalition. Within the PSB-BSP, support was almost unanimous (96 %), whereas within the CVP 75 % of the delegates approved the results. Within this party, however, party president Martens had to first give a general explanation of the text (Luykx & Platel, 1985: 695). The party council of the PSC adopted the agreement with a majority of 84 percent, while within the two regionalist parties support was limited to 67 and 71 % respectively. For these parties it was the first time that compromises on key issues were made to enter office. On 3 June 1977, Tindemans' fifth government was sworn in. A few days later the government was formally approved in parliament.

General features of the coalition agreement

The coalition agreement was less comprehensive than that of the Leburton government (some 12,500 words). The agreement consisted of two separate documents. The first document contained intentions with respect to regionalisation and became known as the *Egmont pact*, after the name of the palace where it had been negotiated. The pact was signed by 12 negotiators and the formateur. The second document contained arrangements on socio-economic policy.

The Egmont pact was a relatively detailed document, more detailed than the section on regionalisation policy in the Leburton agreement. The first paragraph of the pact stated that the coalition parties were committed morally to the intentions on constitutional reform and the implementation of regionalisation. As the present government could not carry out such a constitutional reform, this meant that the pact was to commit not only the present government, but also the *following* one. Prime minister Tindemans preferred to remain realistic, and declared that the agreement could mean 'both war and peace' (Luykx & Platel, 1985: 697).

CONFLICTS, ARRANGEMENTS, AND POLICY MAKING

From conflicts to arrangements

Regionalisation policy

Regionalisation policy was the first issue that was 'inherited' from the previous government. More specifically, direct confrontations between the prospective coalition parties took place on the composition and competences of the regional bodies, the financial resources of the regions and the decision making bodies of the language communities. Further subjects of manifest controversy were the implementation procedures, the role of the provinces, and the boundaries of Brussels. As in the agreement of the Leburton government, a distinction was made between transitional and 'definitive' arrangements. Generally, the positions of the traditional parties had not changed much since the time of the Leburton government, which as we saw had achieved little in this area.

The regional bodies With regard to the composition of the regional bodies, the parties agreed that after a transitional period, the regional councils of Flanders and Wallonia would consist of directly elected representatives. The size of these regional councils was to be the same as the number of *parliamentary* representatives elected in the respective region. The Brussels regional council however was to consist of twice the number of *parliamentary* representatives from Brussels. Within the Brussels regional council, the so called *alarm bell procedure* could be started. This benefited the Flemish parties, as these formed a minority in Brussels. There was also to be French speaking and Dutch speaking cultural committees in Brussels, which were to be elected by the two language groups within the Brussels regional council. This arrangement also mentioned further details on these points, for example on the election procedure, and as such formed an explicit compromise.

Another explicit compromise was formulated on the executive bodies of Wallonia and Flanders, the regional governments, of which the members were to be elected by and from within the regional councils. The Brussels executive body was to consist of a maximum of seven members, including at least two Dutch speakers. This meant that the principle of language parity (an equal number of French speakers and Dutch speakers) would not be upheld. This constituted an important payoff for the Francophone parties, in particular the FDF.

Regional competences and finances With respect to regional competences, a detailed explicit compromise was reached. The Brussels regional council would take over the existing competences of the agglomeration council, which would be abolished (Luykx & Platel, 1985: 700).

With regard to the financial resources of the regions, party preferences differed most on the distributional aspect and on the possibility of the regions levying their own taxes. Again an explicit compromise was made which stated that regional taxation would be introduced, be it only in the 'definitive' stage of regionalisation, so not during the term of the government which was being formed. Further, subsidies from the central government to the regions were to be distributed in the following manner: 1/3 in proportion to population, 1/3 in proportion to area, and 1/3 in proportion to direct taxes. Here it appeared that not only party positions had remained largely the same, but also the results of bargaining, as four years earlier essentially the same arrangement had been hammered out. These subsidies would be linked to the annual increase in the national budget.

The community bodies A next issue was the composition and competences of the bodies representing the language communities. Regionalisation was a problem of territory and economic decentralisation, while the problem of the communities concerned language and cultural matters. With respect to the composition of the community bodies, the parties reached an explicit compromise which stated that the community councils (which thusfar were called cultural councils) would come to consist of the regional representatives of Wallonia and Flanders respectively, including also the members of the French speaking and Dutch speaking language group in the Brussels regional council. This implied that there would be an overlap in the membership of the community councils and the regional councils. Yet, the two bodies would have different competences. This was a major concession from the VU and a group within the CVP that had preferred a complete merger of the regional and community councils in Flanders.

An explicit compromise was also reached on the executive body of the communities. This body was to contain two members, elected 'by and from within' the community councils, but they were supposed to come from different regional councils, with one always coming from the Brussels regional council. With regard to the language communities in the Brussels region, a special procedure was thought out. Each of the 19 municipalities in Brussels was to set up two 'community committees', of which the members were to be elected in municipal elections (the exact size of the committees was left open). The committees were to advise their respective municipalities on matters belonging to the competence of the communities (cultural matters), and they also were to control the expenses of the communities within the municipalities.

Community competences and finances With regard to the competences of the community bodies, a particularly thorny issue was the definition of the 'matières personnalisables', matters next to the cultural affairs on which the communities already had competence. This extension was to increase what was called the 'cultural autonomy' of the communities. Such autonomy was strongly desired on the Flemish side, but the French speaking parties, especially the

PSB, wanted to maintain several 'transferable' tasks, such as health, at the level of the central government. The reason for this was mainly financial. The PSB conceded on this issue, the result being an explicit compromise stating that competences, also on health, would be attributed to the communities.

Financial resources were, as before, to be provided by the central government, the point at stake now being a new distribution ratio. The main difference between the parties on this point regarded the relative weight of population size as a criterion. The Dutch speaking parties would benefit from more emphasis on this factor, whereas the French speaking parties demanded that more weight be given to area size. On this point an explicit compromise was also reached which stated that in the new distribution of subsidies resources would depend for 2/3 on population size, and for 1/3 on area size.

Implementation procedures and transitional arrangements Most of the arrangements mentioned in the above paragraphs were meant to be implemented after a revision of the constitution in a *next* parliamentary term. Negotiations were also undertaken on the regional and community bodies during a transitional period. The parties made an explicit compromise containing several different elements. Three bills would be drafted, which were to be submitted in parliament 'as soon as possible'. The first bill regarded the implementation of article 107 *quater* of the constitution. The second bill was on the extension of cultural matters to the 'matières personnalisables' mentioned before. The third bill was to modify existing legislation on language in administrative affairs.

The first bill was politically important, and was to contain a chapter on the 'definitive' arrangements, to which the condition of a constitutional revision was linked, and a chapter on several transitional arrangements. These transitional arrangements would remain valid until the new regional councils and executives were set up, and in any case expire one year after the next parliamentary elections. During this transitional stage, the regional councils of Wallonia and Flanders were to consist of members of the national parliament. The Brussels regional council was to be composed of representatives and senators from both language groups in parliament. Further, regional financial resources in this stage would consist entirely of subsidies from the national government.

Provinces and subregions A next point on the formation agenda was the future status of the provinces and the setting up of subregions. Disagreement existed on whether these subregions were to exist next to the other administrative entities, or were to replace the provinces. In an explicit compromise it was stated that subregions would be set up after the transitional stage of regionalisation; the role of the provinces would be reduced. The main conceding parties on this issue were the PSC and FDF.

The boundaries of the Brussels region Delineation of the Brussels region was kept for the

final round of negotiations, to avoid that no agreement on regionalisation would be reached at all in case of persistent disagreement on the issue. The French speaking parties stood for unconstrained expansion of Brussels, and at the very least an extension of the facilities for French speakers in the municipalities in the Brussels periphery, whereas the Dutch speakers spoke of a Brussels 'oil slick' which had to be contained, and for this reason they wanted to limit the new region to the 19 officially bilingual municipalities. More specifically, the FDF and PSC demanded the annexation of six municipalities with facilities for French speakers (these were located in the Flemish province of Brabant, an important geographical and political fact) as well as of four separate districts on the periphery of the agglomeration.

On this final issue the parties also reached an explicit compromise. This compromise was based partly on an agreement made several years earlier, but which had never been implemented. It included the possibility for French speakers in the six peripheral municipalities and in several other areas to take out fictitious domicile (a 'subscription') in one of the 19 official municipalities of Brussels. In doing so, they obtained the right to vote in the elections of that municipality, and also partly obtained the same rights and duties on administrative, judicial and fiscal matters as the 'official' Brusselers. The government was to decide on the duration of this right. A second element of the compromise contained the extension of facilities for the French speakers in the six municipalities to the cultural and personal matters defined earlier in the arrangement on the community councils. This subscription right and the extended facilities for French speakers (referred to as 'inhabitants' or 'minorities') were acquired at the price of status quo on the boundaries of Brussels, which thus remained limited to the agglomeration of 19 municipalities. A third element was the division of the Brussels electoral district. This division thusfar had been blocked by the French speaking parties, for example during the formation of the Leburton government in early 1973.

Socio-economic policy

Though the parties intended to deal less with the details of socio-economic policy, there were some issues on which conflict became manifest. These issues were the budget deficit, the coupling of wages and social benefits to economic development, employment policy, and state intervention in industry, which divided mainly the two traditional party families, the Christian Democrats and Socialists.

To begin with, the Socialists demanded extra taxes to decrease the budget deficit. This demand was rejected most firmly by formateur Tindemans himself, who even threatened to withdraw if tax increases were considered seriously (De Standaard, 17-25 May 1977). Negotiations on this matter resulted in a general implicit compromise.

Another demand of the Socialists was that wages and social benefits be linked directly to the index of consumer prices. The other parties gave way on this point, which was written down in the coalition agreement. Less clear cut were intentions on employment policy. Here,

the PSB-BSP wanted an employment plan, which met with considerable scepticism from the CVP. A general implicit compromise was formulated, which was to be elaborated by the government.

Finally, as in the Leburton coalition, the Socialists and Christian Democrats disagreed on state intervention in industry and in the banking sector. The Flemish Christian Democrats, including formateur Tindemans, were suspicious of Socialist attempts to increase state control in these areas. On this point of contention the parties got no further than formulating a general implicit compromise, stating that the government would be active in different sectors of the economy 'on the basis of equality with the private sector'.

Table 6.1 contains a summary of the arrangements made on issues in the two fields where bargaining took place.

Table 6.1
Arrangements in Tindemans V coalition agreement

policy field	type of arrangement			
	explicit	procedural	general	
regionalisation policy	12	-	-	12
financial/budgetary policy	-	-	1	1
socio-economic policy	1	-	2	3
	12	-	3	15

Arrangements and policy making

Regionalisation policy

One month after the government had taken office, an amendment of an 'Act on a provisional set up of the regional bodies' (1974) was approved in parliament. The amendment was necessary to make the act compatible with the coalition agreement. In the coalition agreement a bill for the transitional stage of regionalisation was announced, giving an outline of the proposed bill. Parliament also approved a bill in which the elections of the Brussels agglomeration council were suspended. This bill was based on the intention in the coalition agreement to abolish the agglomeration council, the functions of which were to be taken over by the Brussels regional council (KHA, 1977: 457).

The coalition agreement contained three bills which were to encompass the elements of the Egmont pact. One bill was to comprise the extended list of cultural matters, concerning the communities, and one covered the use of language in the administration. The third bill

regarded the implementation of article *107 quater* of the constitution containing the setting up of three regions. What was the government's performance with regard to these three bills?

In the late summer of 1977, the government began to translate arrangements in the Egmont pact into first drafts. Soon, a difference of interpretation occurred on the meaning of the arrangement for the subscription right for French speakers in the Brussels periphery. According to one of the state secretaries of Institutional Reform, De Bondt (CVP), the subscription right was meant to be used only once in the near future. This interpretation was heavily contested by the PSC and FDF. In their view, the agreement contained no indication of a time limit, so that the subscription right should be seen as a permanent right. Thus, conflict arose over an explicit compromise which at the time of government formation was seen as being fairly clear cut and unambiguous.

More conflicts occurred. One conflict was on the future status of the subregions, on which an explicit but still not very specific compromise had been formulated. Another conflict regarded the community committees in the Brussels municipalities and their functional equivalents in the periphery. More specifically, controversy existed on the size of these committees and on the distribution of subsidies between the two language groups in the municipalities. Third, the arrangement on the composition of the regional executives was seen to need further elaboration. Here, one problem was that the French and Dutch version of the same arrangement appeared to give rise to different interpretations (KHA, 1978: 53-54). Thus, turning the Egmont pact into draft bills first required exegesis of the document.

From one pact to the next, but not to legislation In September 1977, a special committee was set up, containing the party presidents, some other spokespersons from the parties, the two state secretaries of Institutional Reform, and the prime minister, who would chair the committee's meetings. This informal group was called the 'editorial committee', and was to interpret the arrangements and 'fill in the possible gaps' in the Egmont pact (KHA, 1977: 707). Policy making was thus transferred from the formal decision making bodies to an informal arena. The expected result of the committee's meetings was that the bill on regionalisation could be submitted in parliament without further delay (Brassine & Mabile, 1978: 9-11; KHA, 1977: 742-743).

Though most party presidents continued to declare that the Egmont agreement was to be implemented 'loyally and correctly', and Tindemans emphasised that the parties had committed themselves to refrain from making other proposals not just in one but in *two* parliamentary terms, the discussions soon took on the character of new negotiations, and lasted four months. The result was a new document referred to as the Stuyvenberg pact (Platel, 1978: 448, 454). At the end of February 1978, the document was ratified by the cabinet, with parliamentary approval following one month later (KHA, 1978: 199).

The Stuyvenberg pact contained extended and often more specific arrangements on

matters which had given rise to conflict. Next, the government again faced the task of translating intentions into texts for the draft bill, which came to be known as bill no. 461. This was done for the arrangements for the transitional period first, for which no revision of the constitution was required. As before, discussions were painstaking, especially over the community committees in the six municipalities around Brussels, the subscription right, and the decision making procedures in the Brussels regional executive. Only after frequent interventions by what was called the 'junta' of party presidents, referring to the key role of these party leaders in the process, was the drafting of bill 461 completed. In early July, the bill was approved by the cabinet and subsequently submitted to parliament. In the Chamber of Representatives, the bill was examined by a parliamentary committee chaired by Wilfried Martens (who was party president of the CVP and an MP). In fact, nearly the whole 'junta' took a seat on the parliamentary committee (Brassine & Mabilie: 13).

The parliamentary committee, however, was unable to proceed in line with the time schedule. First, at the end of July, the Council of State (a constitutional advisory body of the government) gave negative advice on several articles in bill 461. Indeed, the Council of State even declared some articles unconstitutional, notably those based on the rather complex compromises over Brussels. The reactions of the party leaders were rather different. Prime minister Tindemans preferred to follow at least the main lines of the advice, but PSB president Cools suggested ignoring it. In his view, the will of the party presidents was no less respectable than the constitution. This pressure had effect, as the cabinet decided not to engage in a reformulation of the articles in question, at least not in the short term. This however did not lead to consensus within the parliamentary committee, which appeared to be unable to vote on a first part of the bill (KHA, 1978: 553).

An article containing the possibility of a *de facto* merger of the regional councils and community councils was heavily disputed. The problem was that such a merger, which would be considered only in the Flemish case went beyond the what was written in the Egmont-Stuyvenberg pact, but was mentioned explicitly in the bill. The French speaking parties insisted that this article was amended. Again, the party presidents met and formulated a compromise in which the possibility of joint meetings of the Flemish regional and community councils was included, as long as these meetings would not be in Brussels (De Standaard, 5-11 September 1978). At the end of September, the parliamentary committee approved the amended bill, so that plenary discussions could be started.

This 'prefixed' agreement within the committee, however, did not prevent a group from within the parliamentary party of the CVP starting to make objections to several articles in the bill, and it obtained the sympathy of the prime minister, who had never shown great affinity for the Egmont and Stuyvenberg pact. The group decided not to support the bill as long as it contained elements which the Council of State had called unconstitutional. This was a problem, as the government was not competent to revise the constitution during its term. When Tindemans refrained from restoring discipline within his party, the French speaking

ministers threatened to withdraw from the government. On 11 October 1978 the party presidents of the PSB, PSC and VU also attacked the prime minister, who reacted by tendering his resignation and causing the fall of the government.

Financial and socio-economic policy

In contrast to the Egmont pact, arrangements in the fields of financial and socio-economic policy were mostly general implicit compromises.

In the government's first half year in office, socio-economic policy was elaborated and implemented in accordance with the coalition agreement, and without real political difficulties. The Socialists, who had made most demands but had to satisfy themselves with rather general arrangements, even declared themselves to be 'highly satisfied' with socio-economic policy (KHA, 1977: 678).

Problems however began to rise in early 1978, when the government was confronted with a massive 'gap' between the initially estimated budget deficit and the actual deficit, which appeared to be 65 billion Belgian francs instead of 24 billion (KHA, 1978: 136). Decisions to give financial support to several industries in Flanders and Wallonia were made in line with the coalition agreement, but the parties had difficulties in agreeing on retrenchment policy. The government had announced a bill on economic and budgetary policy, which was to be submitted in parliament before the end of May 1978. To the prime minister, this was important enough to declare that the government could only remain in office if parliament approved the bill without delay, but first of all, consensus was to be reached within the government. The ministers of the CVP (among whom the minister of Finance and the prime minister) stressed that cutbacks in expenditures were to have priority, and that taxes were to decrease rather than increase. The state secretary of the Budget (also CVP) asked for far reaching special discretionary powers (*pouvoirs speciaux*) for the government to take measures without first awaiting parliamentary approval. The PSB-BSP, and also the VU, opposed special powers for budgetary policy, and declared that economic reforms and the extension of state control in several sectors of the economy should have more emphasis in governmental policy. Moreover, the FDF and the French speaking Socialists insisted that the bill on economic and budgetary policy be submitted to parliament together with the bill on regionalisation, which in the eyes of the prime minister was 'pure blackmail'.

These disputes almost led to a government crisis. According to prime minister Tindemans the Socialists were not sufficiently cooperative, and on 14 June 1978 he tendered the resignation of the government, which was however not accepted by the King. The prime minister was instructed to resolve the conflict, which was also the preference of the party presidents, to whom regionalisation was sufficiently important to continue to support the coalition. The conflict was resolved in a joint meeting of the cabinet committee on economic and social policy and the party presidents, in which it was decided that the bill on economic policy would be submitted and approved in parliament before the summer recess. The bill

on economic policy was submitted, in two separate parts, to parliament, where it was approved at the end of June, just before the summer break. The two important elements in the bill were several initiatives and measures in the sphere of public investments and state control in different sectors of the economy, and the delegation of *pouvoirs speciaux* (special powers) to the government. The first element contained gains to the Socialists, and the second to the CVP (KHA, 1978: 425-426; Luykx & Platel: 712-713).

SUCCESSSES AND FAILURES OF THE TINDEMANS V COALITION

Let us consider the outcomes in the light of the hypotheses on the effects of explicit and implicit compromises. Table 6.2 summarises the outcomes of explicit and implicit compromises.

Table 6.2
Outcomes of arrangements in Tindemans V coalition agreement

Outcome	Type of arrangement		
	explicit	implicit-general	
elaborated/implemented (no conflict)	1 (so-ec)	-	(1)
not elaborated/implemented (no conflict)	5 (reg)	-	(5)
elaborated/implemented (conflict)	-	3 (fin,so-ec)	(3)
not elaborated/implemented (conflict)	6 (reg)	-	(6)
	(12)	(3)	(15)

key to symbols:
so-ec = socio-economic policy fin = financial/budgetary policy
reg = regionalisation policy

The streamlining effect of explicit compromises

Explicit compromises were almost never implemented without conflict, or indeed were not implemented at all. Only one of the twelve arrangements of this type was implemented when the government broke down in October 1978. This was the arrangement on the link between wages and social benefits to the consumer price index, on which no conflict re-occurred. All other explicit compromises were not implemented, either because conflict paralysed the implementation process or because, in a more indirect way, the premature end of the government prevented this. The conclusion must thus be that developments in the Tindemans V coalition provide no evidence, rather provide counterevidence, for the hypothesis that explicit compromises are implemented peacefully.

Though this conclusion stands, it should be noted that a number of explicit compromises had at least streamlined policy making within the *government* before matters were discussed in parliament. These arrangements included the composition and competences of the regional councils and the community councils, as well as regional finances. That these arrangements eventually remained unimplemented in the way defined in this study was due to the breakdown of the coalition after conflict on other points.

Covell (1982: 457) has argued that it was the symmetry of the agenda after the resolution of problems on socio-economic policy (summer 1978) that meant that a crisis became inevitable. Over Brussels especially, there was direct confrontation between the parties, in which the most desired goals of one party were the most resisted concessions of the other. Dissent within the CVP formed an extra complication. For the 'dissenting' group within this party, for whom prime minister Tindemans felt sympathy, coalition breakdown was not the worst possible outcome. Elections would delay regionalisation, and such elections were also expected to benefit the CVP, which could then attack the VU for having 'sold out' over Flemish interests.

The boomerang effect of general implicit compromises

Though in the first half year of the government's life, financial and budgetary policy was determined without real political difficulties, things changed in the government's second half year. At stake was legislation on budgetary policy and on the regulation of state intervention in different sectors of the economy, about which only general statements were included in the coalition agreement. A governmental crisis could be resolved only with the help of the party presidents. 'Guided' by these party presidents, the government reached agreement on legislation, which was eventually approved in parliament. Thus, in the field of financial and socio-economic policy, substantive successes were reached, with the parties remaining within the general framework set in the coalition agreement. The occurrence of conflict is in line

with the hypothesis on general implicit compromises, but the relative success in terms of substantive policy decisions, when compared with outcomes of explicit compromises, was not expected.

Table 6.3 gives the general outcomes in terms of conflict and implementation. Failure was somewhat more frequent in terms of non-implementation than in terms of conflict (11/15 and 9/15). It is important to realise that the figure shows frequencies. I have not weighed policies or arrangements which were or were not implemented, nor have I differentiated between more and less intense conflicts.

Table 6.3
Success and failure of the Tindemans V coalition

		implementation	
		+	-
conflict	-	1	5
	+	3	6

FACTORS EXPLAINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE

What might explain successes and especially, the failures of the Tindemans V coalition in the process of implementing the coalition agreement? Which factors relating to the coalition and its composite elements played a part? What was the impact of general economic developments? I deal with these questions in this section. As in the case of the Leburton coalition, we should begin by noting that a number of arrangements (6 of a total of 15, and all explicit compromises) remained unimplemented because of the premature end of the government, without conflict on *these* arrangements being the direct cause of breakdown. It is important to distinguish these arrangements from the others when examining the impact of factors which were assumed to be favourable or unfavourable conditions for implementation.

Table 6.4 shows whether factors were associated with outcomes of arrangements in the way as was assumed. Remember that the association was considered 'strong' if it represented at least two thirds of the cases, and 'weak' if it represented fewer but not less than half the

number of arrangements. Except for the factor of coalition size, differentiation has been made between the relevant fields of policy. As we are dealing with even fewer arrangements than in the previous case-study, extreme caution is needed when interpreting the table. Obviously, the data presented are insufficient for statistical analysis.

Table 6.4
Association between factors and outcomes in the Tindemans V coalition, per policy field³

factor	policy field		
	regionalisation	financial	socio-economic
coalition size	o	o	o
internal party unity	--	++	++
negotiators in government	--	++	++
prime ministerial support	--	++	++
coalition committees	o	o	o
personal relationships	-	n.a.	n.a.
economic situation	n.a.	o	o

key to symbols:

- ++ or + direct association factor with success
- or - direct association factor with failure
- o no association found
- n.a. not assessed (no indication of presence or absence factor)

Coalition size and reciprocal control

The first factor that was assumed to be unfavourable was the multi-party character of the coalition. From the perspective of individual parties, limited payoffs from particular arrangements in combination with lower expectations of 'punishment', and perhaps even support from one or more other parties, were assumed to increase the temptation for parties to ignore partly or completely the commitments they had made during government formation.

In the present case, however, there is only a weak association between coalition size and outcomes (of the 9 arrangements considered in this section, 5 were not implemented). This suggests that the number of parties as a general factor has had only a limited impact on reciprocal control within the coalition, and in the fields of socio-economic and financial

³ See the appendix for the detailed findings on the Tindemans V coalition.

policy other factors are likely to have strengthened this enforcement mechanism. In this respect, it should be noted that in the fields of financial and socio-economic policy conflict was mainly between the two traditional party families, especially the CVP and the PSB. The CVP, or more precisely the prime minister, 'blackmailed' the PSB-BSP by threatening a crisis if no substantive policies were approved before the end of the parliamentary year in 1978. Conversely, the PSB demanded loyalty to the joint, and often specified, intentions in the area of regionalisation, which however required more time to be turned into legislation, a situation that was unfavourable to the Socialists but left this party no other choice, at least not for as long as it underwrote the Egmont-Stuyvenberg agreement.

The internal unity of coalition parties

Did internal divisions exist within the coalition parties, and if so, did these contribute to failure? The CVP increasingly became divided on regionalisation, with a 'unitarist' wing led by prime minister Tindemans competing with the 'federalists' with the party president Martens as the first spokesperson. Martens had been prominent in the drafting of the Egmont and Stuyvenberg agreements (remember that support within this party for the coalition agreement had been far from unanimous). The officially still unitary PSB-BSP was also divided on regionalisation (the party split soon after the fall of the government).

All outcomes in the different fields of policy appeared to be associated with the presence or absence of internal divisions in the way assumed. In the case descriptions we saw that internal divisions within the CVP had an impact on policy making, and these are likely to have contributed to failure in the field of regionalisation and community policy. This is in contrast to the situation in the field of socio-economic policy, where no intra-party divisions on coalition policy became manifest, even if there were factions within the CVP and PSC.

Negotiators as ministers

Did the presence or absence of negotiators in the Tindemans V government make a difference? Most ministers who were competent on matters of regionalisation policy were not involved in the negotiations during government formation. This was also the case with the two state secretaries of Institutional Reform, of whom one (CVP) was even a spokesman of a local branch of the CVP which had voted against the Egmont pact (De Ridder, 1982: 270). Only in the area of financial and socio-economic policy were ministers negotiators. One of these, the minister of Economic Affairs Willy Claes (BSP), was party president until his appointment as a minister.

This at least suggests that ministerial background made a difference in the process of implementation, though it is difficult to be precise about the impact of this factor, and we should realise that failure did not always occur in the government but also in the parliamentary and extraparliamentary arena.

Prime ministerial support

The prime minister played different roles in the enforcement process. He guided the elaboration of the coalition agreement in the field of socio-economic policy, with success. If perhaps not an activist in the sense of making substantive proposals, he certainly facilitated the elaboration of the coalition agreement, and even threatened a crisis to speed things up. This contrasts rather sharply with his role in the area of regionalisation policy. As a *formateur*, Tindemans already spoke of the Egmont pact as a 'party president's pact' which he signed with reluctance (De Ridder, 1982: 133). Later, he often called in the help of the party presidents, and even proposed to lay the drafting of legislation in their hands. Though he did not approve of the fact that the party presidents were so clearly holding the cards on policy making, this behaviour resulted directly from his unwillingness to bear responsibility for the regionalisation programme, which he called unconstitutional and in his view went against the interests of the CVP in the national political institutions. If perhaps not entirely a matter of 'rational calculation', his decision to tender the resignation of the government may also be seen in this light. In short, prime ministerial support for or opposition to the coalition agreement is likely to have been a relevant factor in explaining success, and especially failure.

Personal relationships

Personal relationships were seen to play a part only as manifest personal clashes between party prominents, given the difficulty of assessing the impact of good personal relationships. In the case of the Tindemans coalition, tensions between prominents seem to have been relevant. The prime minister's manoeuvres during the last days of the government cannot be fully understood without considering personal relationships. Generally, there was a good atmosphere within the 'club' of party presidents. Things however were different between several ministers and party presidents; there was strong antagonism between the prime minister and PSB president André Cools, and this is likely to have contributed directly to the breakdown of the coalition (De Ridder, 1982: 206).

Coalition committees

One of the remarkable things about the Tindemans V coalition was the presence of a 'junta' of party presidents. This group became manifest during government formation. According to one author, the party presidents, who had negotiated the Egmont pact in absolute secrecy, had become alienated from the rest of their party, even from those within the party who were 'ministrable' (De Ridder, 1982: 138; 1989: 109-122).

The paradoxical situation in the Tindemans coalition is that successes occurred in the fields in which coalition committees, containing spokespersons from different party sections, do not seem to have played a part, whereas the transfer of policy making to such informal committees did not prevent failure being the definitive outcome. It was after discussions were shifted to the parliamentary arena that conflicts began to escalate. There, the party presidents also lost control of the process. In short, developments in the Tindemans V coalition do not provide clear evidence for the assumption that the presence or absence of coalition committees contributes directly to success or failure.

The economic situation

Finally, did the economic situation influence parties in dealing with arrangements in the areas of financial and socio-economic policy? The troubled state of the national economy was generally acknowledged. Intentions however were mostly general, so that further negotiations were necessary and as we have seen these involved interparty conflict. This conflict arose around policies which were difficult to integrate; the CVP demanded cutbacks and the Socialists pressed for financial injections for troubled industries and for an active employment policy. The role of economic developments seems to have played a part in the process of elaboration but, despite conflicts occurring, not in the negative way assumed. This factor rather had a positive effect on implementation.

CONCLUSION

For a five party coalition, the scope of bargaining during the formation of the Tindemans V government was relatively limited. The main reason for this seems to be that policy in the area of regionalisation formed the *raison d'être* of the government. Moreover, two of the five parties, the regionalist VU and FDF, profiled themselves mainly in this area. At the same time, it is important to realise that the scope of bargaining says little of the intensity of

conflict and, as a consequence, about the difficulty of reaching a substantive agreement.

The two main fields of policy dealt with during government formation, socio-economic policy and *la question communautaire*, also dominated the agenda of the Tindemans V coalition once in office. In this sense, the coalition agreement very clearly constituted an agenda for the government. The relevant arrangements however did not prevent conflict re-occurring. With respect to policy the conclusion must be that the process of implementation got stuck at the stage of parliamentary discussion, and it was there that the coalition broke down on regionalisation policy, in particular over the Brussels issue. The relevant parts in the coalition agreement were thus mostly not instrumental in preventing conflict (only 6 of the 15 arrangements did not give rise to new conflict), and still less to assisting policy making (only 4 arrangements were implemented).

When considering the relatively limited successes of the coalition, a factor that seems to have played a part is the general economic situation, which induced parties to take the elaboration of general arrangements seriously, even if this meant that conflicts on priorities broke out. Next, with regard to characteristics of the coalition and its composite elements, the absence of manifest divisions within the coalition parties (even though factions existed) and the presence of negotiators in the relevant fields are likely to have contributed to success in the areas of financial and socio-economic policy. There were also indications that the support of the prime minister, who gave great weight to decisions on financial and socio-economic policy, was a relevant factor. Indeed, if the multiparty character was assumed to reduce the possibilities for mutual control as an enforcement mechanism, the prime minister seems to have effectively blackmailed the PSB-BSP by threatening a crisis to increase this party's willingness to cooperate.

It seems to be more than a coincidence that failures occurred precisely in the areas where negotiators were absent, the traditional parties were internally divided and the position of the prime minister varied between halfhearted support and open resistance to the coalition agreement. To this, we may add that personal relationships between several prominents who played an active role in the area of regionalisation policy were becoming highly strained. Gains and losses made in this area weighed heavily on all coalition parties, and contrary to the situation which existed when decisions on economic policy were made, no party was in a position to enforce cooperation, nor was the prime minister willing to do this.

Though the party presidents were very prominent here, their mostly informal actions were not sufficient to guide legislation on regionalisation through parliament. Covell (1982) has argued that differences between informal and formal policy making arenas were important. After informal discussions during government formation and later during the Stuyvenberg negotiations were completed, the agreement had to be implemented by the formal decision making bodies. There, support for the coalition agreement eroded rapidly or indeed was limited from the start. In the parliamentary arena, the sense of an opportunity within the CVP to give the Flemish People's Union a blow in elections may also have formed

a reason why this party increasingly became intransigent, with the prime minister refusing to cooperate.

7

The Van Agt II Coalition (1981-1982)

A THREE PARTY COALITION

The three largest parties all lost votes in the parliamentary elections of 26 May 1981. A term in opposition for the PvdA had not proved to be an asset for this party, as it lost nearly 20 percent of its seats (from 53 to 44) and became the second party after the CDA, which took 48 seats with only limited losses. Importantly, the incumbent CDA-VVD coalition, which had managed to complete a four year term in office, lost its majority. The 'winners' in the elections were the Democrats 1966 (D66), who went from 8 to 17 seats. This brought the party into an important position during government formation.

In the Netherlands, there is a general consensus that governments must be majority governments, thus a new party combination had to be formed. Other constraints reduced further the number of possible or viable alternatives (Tops & Dittrich, 1992: 286). The public refusal by D66 to participate in a government consisting of the CDA and VVD was important in this respect. The party had announced this before the elections and persisted in its refusal afterwards. As a coalition including the VVD and the PvdA was unlikely due to party political constraints; the PvdA excluded co-operation with the VVD, and for this reason the only two viable alternatives appeared to be a coalition of the CDA and PvdA, or one formed from the CDA, PvdA and D66.¹ The former would be minimal winning, the latter a surplus majority coalition. In either case, the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats would become coalition partners. Thus, as the biggest party, the CDA this time had no alternative but to cooperate with the PvdA.

In this respect, the experiences of these parties in office and during government formation in the preceding eight or so years were relevant. From 1973 till 1977, the PvdA and the KVP and ARP (two of the three parties which merged to form the CDA in 1980) had participated in a government (the Den Uyl government) which eventually broke down over an internal dispute just before the end of the four year constitutional term. In

¹ The theoretical possibility of a coalition between CDA, VVD and the small right wing (religious) parties was not considered a viable alternative by either the CDA or the VVD.

the following government, the CDA and PvdA made no less than six attempts to form a government, but without success. After protracted bargaining between the two parties, the Party Council of the PvdA voted against government participation. Within a week, a CDA-VVD government (the Van Agt I government) was formed. Both these experiences greatly increased the mistrust between the two parties. The distances perceived between the policy preferences of the PvdA and CDA on financial and socio-economic policy were also seen to be much larger than those between the CDA and VVD. Together, these factors meant that during the formation of the Van Agt II government the negotiations on a coalition agreement were likely to be anything but easy.

The formation process

Of the two coalitional alternatives, the three party option was preferred most by the CDA and the PvdA. Though the PvdA and D66 had not formed a real pre-electoral coalition, both parties had stated publicly that they preferred joint participation in the new government. The PvdA recognised that D66 could not be ignored because of its electoral victory. To the CDA, inclusion of D66 meant a decrease in the relative weight of the PvdA within the government. Thus, formation talks between CDA, PvdA and D66 were started at the end of May.

The first point on the agenda was the question of who would be the new prime minister. Normally, the largest party may claim the office of prime minister, in this case the prime minister would again be a Christian Democrat. This was also emphasised by the two *informateurs* (both CDA) who presided over the discussions. The outgoing prime minister Dries van Agt, however, was not attractive to the other parties who had some difficulties with accepting him. They declared that they had problems with the ex-prime minister of a centre right government who now was supposed to become the leader of a government with an entirely different signature. Moreover, the personal relationship between Van Agt and the leader of the PvdA, Joop den Uyl, was anything but close. Only after lengthy discussions was agreement reached on this matter. D66 accepted Van Agt finally, followed by the PvdA in early July. The *informateurs* promised the PvdA that this concession would be compensated for in the distribution of cabinet portfolios.

By this time (early July), policy negotiations had started. Contrary to what had been common during most of the preceding formations, the issues were not dealt with consecutively but, as the *informateurs* called it, the approach was now 'concentric'. This meant that more general discussions on several fields of policy would be held first, followed by negotiations on the really salient and controversial matters that had emerged during the first round.

This approach to policy negotiations did not prevent the PvdA from presenting firmly six demands (*strijdpunten*). These were taken from the party's election manifesto.

These points regarded (1) a decrease in differences in incomes, (2) no decrease in the spending power of the lowest income groups, (3) equal opportunities for men and women, including individualisation of incomes, (4) elaboration of a plan for the creation of 300,000 jobs, (5) the closing down of the two nuclear power stations in the Netherlands, and finally (6) dropping four or five of the six existing military nuclear tasks, and renouncement of the deployment of cruise missiles in the Netherlands. For the PvdA, an agreement on these issues was a *conditio sine qua non* for government participation, but unlike in 1977, it had not declared these matters to be 'unnegotiable'.

This last point was important, as the six issues were in some cases not only salient to the PvdA. The points relating to economic and defense policy were also highly salient to the CDA and D66. Another issue that was generally important was secondary school reform. Given these points, bargaining on coalition policy was thus likely to take place in a 'multidimensional' policy space. The issues relating to economic and financial policy were often 'compromisable', while the other issues seemed less so.

The relay race of informateurs and formateurs

After a first round of negotiations, PvdA-leader Den Uyl requested a third *informateur* from within his party. This third *informateur* was Ed van Thijn, the second person after Den Uyl in the parliamentary group. In the second round of negotiations, a document was produced, which in turn would form the basis of further negotiations. These started in early August, with the appointment of two *formateurs* (one from the CDA and one from the PvdA). Usually, with the appointment of a *formateur* the process of government formation has reached its final stage, with the *formateur* becoming the new prime minister. Despite this and given the fact that now there were *two formateurs*, it soon became apparent that the parties were not yet ready to adopt the results of the negotiations on policy. Different groups and organisations from within society were also rather negative about what were called the 'results of the programme discussions'. In the view of the National Bank, the new government could not afford to spend money on an employment plan but instead should start by making drastic cutbacks in expenditure. Van Agt and the financial specialists within the party's parliamentary group referred the Bank's statements when making a number of additional demands on financial and economic policy and by doing so they called into question the compromises reached thusfar. The other two parties, however, were very reluctant to accept these new demands. In fact, the parliamentary groups of the PvdA and D66 were ready to confirm that the programmatic conclusions formed a sufficient basis for the three party government.

Within the parliamentary group of the CDA, there was also support for the agreement. When an internal vote was held, a substantive minority appeared to support the agreement and thus, by implication, rejected the additional claims made by their own party leader. Others voted against the agreement only out of loyalty to Van Agt. Van Agt

reacted by withdrawing from being his party's first spokesman during the negotiations. On the 24th of August, he was replaced by by Ruud Lubbers, the former *informateur* and second man after Van Agt in the parliamentary group. Van Agt however, remained a candidate for the office of prime minister.

The rejection of the results by the majority of the parliamentary group of the CDA caused the *formateurs* to conclude that their attempt to bring the parties closer had failed and therefore they returned their instruction to the Queen. The next day, an *informateur* from the CDA was appointed. This *informateur* immediately focused on the conflictual points. By the end of August, the parties reached agreement on these points so that finally, Van Agt could be appointed *formateur*, with his main task being the actual forming of the government. The CDA and PvdA would each have 6 seats in the cabinet, and D66 would have 3 seats. The three party government was sworn in on 11 September 1981.

Several rounds of bargaining were needed before the final text of the coalition agreement was accepted by the parties. These negotiation rounds were certainly an 'invisible politics' process, as little was made public. Even the three parliamentary groups were not informed continuously and completely.

General features of the coalition agreement

The coalition agreement consisted of some 14,500 words, but it was not one single document. It consisted of what were called the 'results of the programme discussions' and a number of supplementary 'programme conclusions' arrived at in a later stage of the negotiations. The scope of the agreement was broad, including ten main fields of policy. These were the fields on which the first round of discussions in the 'concentric' approach had been held. The agreement clearly reflected the general procedure followed by the successive *informateurs* and *formateurs*; the documents produced later did not contain new issues.

If a closer look is taken at the content of the agreement, few really specific and 'doable' statements are found. At in an early stage of the negotiations, the *informateurs* had noted that the length of the different paragraphs did not relate to the political significance of the subjects dealt with in these paragraphs. 'Sometimes, few words were needed for important questions and many words for less important matters' (HTK, 1981, 17000/2: 5). As we will see, this would have different results with regard to the extent to which policy conflicts were really resolved during the government formation process.

CONFLICTS, ARRANGEMENTS, AND POLICY MAKING

From conflicts to arrangements

Socio-economic and financial policy

During the formation, financial and socio-economic policy was important both because of the deteriorating economic situation and because the three parties had profiled themselves rather differently in this field during the election campaign. The second reason was the most important with respect to the issues on which actual bargaining would take place. During the negotiations, the focus was on cutbacks in expenditures, the budget deficit, elaboration of an employment plan, income and tax policy and investment regulation.

The budget deficit and cuts in expenditures Though the three parties did not show large differences in their preferences with regard to the budget deficit in the long run, dissent remained over the goals for 1982 and 1983. PvdA leader Den Uyl refused to go further than committing his party to an *attempt* to reduce the deficit in 1982 and 1983. CDA leader Van Agt insisted on a commitment from all parties to *realise* a decrease by 1 percent in 1982 and 1 percent in 1983. On this point, D66 was closer to the CDA than to the PvdA.

An explicit compromise on this matter was formulated, containing an intention to decrease the deficit by 1 percent in 1982 and in 1983. This entailed a payoff to the CDA, and D66 also stated that it was satisfied with the arrangement. This compromise however mentioned nothing about the second half of the government's term (1984-1985).

The next, and closely related, point was the size of cuts in government expenditure. CDA leader Van Agt demanded cuts of Dfl. 4.5 billion in 1982, which were also to be mentioned explicitly in the coalition agreement. Both the PvdA and D66 rejected this claim. According to D66, fixing exact amounts was something that should be left to the new government. The PvdA linked the matter to its central point of concern, the employment plan, on which the discussions had still not led to concrete results. Here, the CDA made concessions, as neither Van Agt's claim of 4.5 billion (this was nicknamed his 'dowry') nor any other specific amount of cuts for 1982 was mentioned in the coalition agreement. Agreement was reached only on the amount of cuts for the whole period, which would be 9.5 billion, but this had not been the major point of dispute. Thus, only an implicit compromise could be reached on the problem of the size of cuts. The relative paragraph further said that the emphasis on cuts would cover the first half of the government's term in office.

A distribution ratio for cutbacks in the main sectors of governmental spending was also included. These sectors were social security (mainly the responsibility of the ministry of Social Affairs & Employment), health (ministry of Health), public sector wages

(Internal Affairs) and other departmental spending. This cutback ratio was 3:1:3:2 for the four sectors respectively, and it regarded the whole four year period. It was also stated that new policy could only be developed if it did not involve claims for extra money. New expenses were to be compensated for by cuts elsewhere. In the view of Van Agt, these points in the coalition agreement formed 'an extra lock on the door', to prevent the PvdA from steering towards increases in spending 'for particular purposes'. Yet, the points were sufficiently general to leave doubt as to whether the door was actually closed or still open.

A final point covered the level of rates and taxes, which according to the CDA should be stabilised at the level of 1980. The PvdA's preference was to make an exception for expected revenues from anti-fraud policy, higher costs of public services, increases in gas prices and especially, spending on employment. The CDA advocated a broader definition, and firmly rejected the exception of spending on employment, which in the view of the Christian Democrats would make the whole intention a farce. Negotiations on this point resulted in an arrangement in which it was stated that the level of rates and taxes would be fixed at that existing in 1981 (this was 62.1 percent of the national income; corrected for revenues from gas sales, it was 55.1 percent). The first points mentioned by the PvdA (anti-fraud revenues, costs of public services) were also incorporated into the coalition agreement, but not the last two (gas price increases and spending on employment). This in effect meant an important constraint on any plans in the sphere of employment policy. This arrangement was an explicit compromise containing concessions from all the parties, if not concessions of equal size.

The employment plan Rapidly growing unemployment meant that all three parties had declared that reducing unemployment was to be one of the new government's central goals. The results of bargaining over financial and budgetary policy have already shown that there was clearly less consensus over the way to reduce unemployment. As said, one of the key issues, and part of the new government's *raison d'être* for the PvdA was an employment plan, a typical piece of Keynesian policy adopted by a Social Democratic party. CDA and D66 agreed to mention in the agreement that such a plan would be developed, but the CDA refused to make any further commitments. The arrangement was thus an implicit compromise, which mentioned that an employment plan would be elaborated within 4 months after the government had taken office. Despite being a minimal result, placement of the issue on the agenda of the government was just acceptable to the PvdA. No clear intentions were formulated on the financial resources, an obviously crucial point.

Income and tax policy The CDA and PvdA further disagreed over developments for lowest incomes, referred to as the 'minima', in the coming years. According to the PvdA, the 'minima' should be protected against any decrease in spending power, a promise from

their election manifesto. In the view of the CDA, the most that could be done was to keep the decrease 'as limited as reasonably possible'. On this issue, an explicit compromise was reached, which stated that the spending power of the minima would *decrease* by no more than 1 percent each year; in comparison, for the highest incomes, estimates stood at minus 4 percent per year. This arrangement thus contained a concession from the PvdA but also a commitment for the CDA and D66. If other intentions agreed on between the parties and general economic developments allowed this, the government would give 'special attention' to financial protection of the lowest income group. No absolute guarantees were given however. In the arrangement no exact definition of the 'minima' was given; the CDA had advocated a narrow definition and the PvdA a broad one. The intention to maintain what was called the coupling mechanism between wages and social benefits was an explicit compromise and thus more clearly committing. This in turn entailed a payoff to the PvdA, although it was not perceived as a really important concession by the CDA. Precisely for this reason, and because for the other items mostly vague intentions had been written down, the CDA was the most satisfied with the results of bargaining over income policy.

Another conflict was over fiscal policy with regard to mortgagees. The conflict had two elements. One element concerned the maximum of fiscal provisions for mortgagees in the present fiscal system (the parties set different maxima, an expression of different preferences with regard to graduation in taxation). As a conflict over contingencies, this could be settled by an explicit compromise in which the difference was split, indeed split *exactly*. The other element concerned the setting up of a new system where fiscal facilities would be independent of income. Not surprisingly, the PvdA opposed the introduction of such a system, as it was seen to increase differences in incomes. D66 tended towards the position of the CDA. An implicit compromise was formulated, in which decision making on such a system was left to the government.

Investment regulation A final issue within the field of socio-economic policy was the introduction of, or actually the tightening of, investment regulations. This issue was placed on the agenda by the PvdA. In the view of this party, stricter directions, especially in the housing sector, were needed to ensure investment, which in turn would stimulate employment. Both the CDA and D66 were reluctant to engage in further regulation of this field, and the spokespersons of the CDA demanded that, to avoid the Social Democrats developing false hopes, the coalition agreement should state clearly that *no* plans for legislation on this matter existed. The definitive arrangement on this matter however, provided neither this 'clarity' nor any concrete 'hints' to the contrary. As such, it was an implicit compromise.

Nuclear energy policy

With regard to the issue of nuclear energy, the parties had rather different positions. The

CDA preferred to keep the two existing nuclear power stations in operation, and await the results of a national discussion on (nuclear) energy before deciding on the building of other stations. In contrast, both D66 and the PvdA advocated closing down the two power stations and abandoning plans to build new ones.

Typically, a largely procedural arrangement was formulated. This was typical in the sense that in the Netherlands, as in many other countries, nuclear policy was a position issue, and together with the uncertainty which surrounded nuclear energy in general, agreeing to disagree by asking the advice of external experts was an obvious way to appease the conflict at the political level. This is precisely what happened. It was decided that a committee of independent experts should study the effects of closing down the two nuclear power stations. This study was to be completed within 6 months. Next, the government would define its position, and present this in parliament. A second implicit compromise regarded new nuclear power stations. Here, it was agreed that the government would not deal with the question of new nuclear power stations.

Nuclear weapons policy

The issue of the deployment of cruise missiles was highly conflictual in the Netherlands. The prenegotiation positions of the PvdA and CDA especially were different, if not outrightly incompatible. This was mainly because the PvdA rejected deployment unconditionally (the key issue in their election manifesto, next to the employment plan). The CDA preferred to decide the matter in December 1981, and make the decision taking into account the results of disarmament talks to be held in Geneva. These talks and the deployment of middle distance missiles formed the two components of the infamous NATO 'double decision' of 1979. D66 rejected deployment 'in the present circumstances'. This position was an intraparty compromise between those tending towards the PvdA and those preferring to keep other options open.

Before the final arrangement on this issue was written down, many compromises ended in the waste paper basket. These texts had contained all kinds of complicated clauses, all of them reflecting the lack of real agreement on this matter. As Van Agt complained

we now have many words written down, which actually tell us that there is no real agreement. Let us simply show this by removing all these words and say that we have not reached agreement at all (quoted in: Dittrich, Cohen & Rutgers, 1983: 52-3; author's translation).

Yet, eventually, the parties did agree on an arrangement, which not surprisingly was an implicit compromise. The government would first consult the NATO partners, and then 'determine autonomously when and on what decision making would take place'. In the parliamentary discussions that followed, the three parties would be free to consider these

decisions in the light of their respective election manifestos.

In the constituent meeting of the government, the PvdA ministers underwrote a letter by Ed van Thijn, a former informateur and new minister of Internal Affairs, which said that the Social Democrats in the government would resign if a majority within the government took a positive decision.

School policy

Within the field of education, conflict existed between the parties and again mainly between the CDA and the PvdA, over a reform of the system of secondary education. The PvdA and to a lesser extent D66 were protagonists of reforming secondary education. In its election manifesto, the PvdA had argued in favour of one general and public system of secondary education for the age group 10-14 years (this was called the *middenschool* because it formed a bridge between primary and secondary education). In the view of the Social Democrats, this reform was an important step towards equal opportunities in education. This new system would be more egalitarian than the existing system, and this was precisely the point of concern for the Christian Democrats, who wanted to preserve the existing system in which state schools and subsidised religious schools existed side by side.

In the coalition agreement, it was stated that the existing system of secondary education would be changed. To this purpose, legislation would be submitted 'as soon as possible'. This legislation would bear a transitional character and enlarge the possibilities of experiments with the newly thought out system of secondary education. As the government would draft legislation, parliament should decide on the matter not later than during the course of 1983. Further, it was stated that the article on education in the constitution would be amended, to warrant the financial equality between state (neutral) and religious schools. To this end, the constitutional amendment was to mention that delegation of legislative competences to local government would not be possible. This last point benefited the CDA, but the arrangement as a whole was an implicit compromise.

Table 7.1 shows the results of bargaining on the relevant issues.

Table 7.1
Arrangements in Van Agt II coalition agreement

policy field	type of arrangement			
	explicit	procedural	general	
financial/budgetary policy	2	-	3	5
socio-economic policy	3	-	3	6
school policy	-	-	1	1
nuclear policy	-	3	-	3
	5	3	7	15

Arrangements and policymaking

As with all new governments, the Van Agt II government had to present itself in parliament, though unlike in Belgium, no formal investiture exists in the Netherlands. It was decided that the prime minister would read the government declaration one month after the government had taken office. This was because Van Agt expected that the preparation of the declaration would not be as easy as usual, as this time clarification had to be given on a number of issues on which the parties had been unable to reach substantive agreement.

Some of the key issues in the coalition agreement were on the cabinet agenda immediately after the government took office. These issues were the employment plan, cuts in expenditure, the budget deficit and nuclear weapons. As we have seen, arrangements on these issues were mostly rather general and implicit compromises. With regard to nuclear weapons, the cabinet agreed on what position it would take at the next meeting of the Nuclear Planning Group of NATO, which would be held at the end of 1981. This position was kept secret until the presentation of the government declaration. On financial and socio-economic policy, however, the government got into political problems. As we will see below, these issues were already critical to the life of the government at an early stage.

Financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy

Two of the central issues were cuts in expenditures and the employment plan. The problem was that the policies preferred by the coalition parties were to a large extent mutually exclusive. With regard to the employment plan, the coalition agreement only stated that such a plan would be developed within four months after the government had taken office. Further bargaining was also necessary on the size of cuts in expenditure. As the negotiators during government formation, the ministers involved directly had different

priorities. In the view of the vice prime minister, the government was to act immediately to fight unemployment, beginning with the public sector. The ministers of the CDA and D66 argued instead that more time was needed for the elaboration of the employment plan and also that the private sector should be given more emphasis in governmental policy. The minister of Finance contributed to the discussion by demanding more cuts than agreed on for the coming four years. All this contrasted rather sharply with claims made by the spending departments (these amounted to 4 billion). Since the size of the cuts and certainly determining where they would fall was still not decided, most of the ministers from the spending departments tried to grab what they could. These ministers were mostly Social Democrats.

Conflict also resurfaced on the budget deficit. Though the 1 percent decrease for 1982 mentioned in the coalition agreement was not called into question, several ministers disagreed on the percentage that was to be reached in 1982 (this was because there were different estimations of the percentage for 1981). In the calculations of the minister of finance, the deficit was to be 6.5 percent in 1982, whereas his colleague at Social Affairs & Employment mentioned a percentage of 7 percent. In early October, the cabinet agreed that the government would aim at 6.5 percent in 1982, this entailed a concession from Den Uyl.

At the beginning of October, the government also reached an arrangement on the financial resources for the employment plan. In 1982, 2.6 billion would be made available. Consensus on this issue however, did not last long, as the next day the minister of finance declared that due to a 'miscalculation' far too much money had been promised. In the new situation, only 300 million would be available. The prime minister supported the minister of Finance on this point, as on most other matters. The consequence however was an escalation of conflict, which led to the fall of the government on 16 October 1981, before it had made its presentation in parliament.

An attempt at government reparation

A paradoxical element in the fall of the government was that the ministers had resigned collectively to leave open the possibility of repairing the government. If the Queen would only 'consider the resignation of the cabinet' without immediately accepting it, the parties could try to patch up the cabinet without elections taking place (these after all had been held less than five months before).

The PvdA was given primary responsibility for finding a way out of the crisis. Two *informateurs* were appointed from this party. The *informateurs* first declared that they would take the coalition agreement as the starting point. These negotiations were between the ministers directly responsible and the leaders of the three parliamentary groups. The results of the discussions were carefully kept secret until agreement was reached. The attempt at government reparation was thus made in a setting very similar to the government formation arena.

The *informateurs* started by noting the key points of conflict. These were the same issues as those discussed during government formation. A proposal was made for the financing of the employment plan, containing among other things an increase in income tax by one percent (the PvdA called this a 'solidarity levy'). With regard to cuts in expenditure, the *informateurs* reported that new economic problems had increased the gap between expenditure and income to about 10 billion.

The proposals made by the *informateurs* were not all well received by the three parties. Some elements were rejected outright by all parties. The CDA opposed a proposal for income dependent children's allowances, and there were also objections to the 1 percent 'solidarity levy' which had been included on the instigation of the PvdA.

Reactions were more positive when the *informateurs* produced a second version of the report. In early November, the prime minister declared that the government 'expected to be able to reach agreement' on the basis of the new report, which itself had become almost a new coalition agreement on financial and socio-economic policy. The report mentioned the 'solidarity levy' as well as an intention to collect financial resources amounting to 1 billion for the employment plan in 1982. No specific decisions were made on the contents of the plan.

The income dependent children's allowance was mentioned, but only very generally. The report also stated that the government would 'do its best' to avoid the spending power of the lowest income group decreasing by more than 1 percent in 1982. With respect to the budget deficit, the *informateurs* noted that a decrease to 6.5 percent in 1982 (on which the parties had already reached agreement) would be very difficult to realise.

Though the report was presented as a more elaborate version of the section on socio-economic and financial policy in the coalition agreement, the above points indicate that even this did not result in clear cut and unambiguous statements on the key issues of budgetary policy (HTK, 17000/9: 23-30; Dittrich, Cohen & Rutgers, 1983: 96-102).

The government and socio-economic policy: a replay in slowmotion

The official 'restart' of the government was scheduled for 16 November 1981. The government quickly made a text for the government declaration. This was more because the parties felt that they could no longer postpone presentation of the government in parliament than because they truly agreed on all issues. The declaration also contained the arrangement on nuclear weapons on which the government had earlier reached agreement. The arrangement was again procedural and stated that no decision on the deployment of cruise missiles would be taken in 1981, and that after 1981 the procedure would be as indicated in the coalition agreement.

The government faced the task of taking more specific decisions on cuts in expenditures, income policy and the employment plan on the basis of the results of some 5 months of negotiations. Before engaging in discussions on the budget for the next year,

the budget for 1982 had to be revised, i.e. updated to the economic situation. The minister of Finance proposed cuts of 4.5 billion in 1982 and added that in 1983 spending needed to be reduced by at least 5 billion. This meant that the total amount of cuts for the entire legislative term mentioned in the coalition agreement was to be realised in the first two years, at least if the coalition agreement was followed.

A problem which was still on the agenda however was specifying the employment plan and once again the incompatibility of party preferences became manifest. In early 1982, the budget deficit appeared to be higher than estimated, a consequence being that the agreed 1 percent decrease was insufficient to reduce the deficit to 6.5 percent in 1982. To Den Uyl, this was not a real problem, but Van Agt and the minister of Economic Affairs (D66) said that the government was committed to 6.5 percent in 1982.

All this caused the government to postpone the presentation of the *Voorjaarsnota*, a white paper containing the financial/budgetary framework for the coming year. Just before Easter, a compromise was reached on the size of cuts in 1982 and 1983. The parties also decided to leave the budget deficit unchanged in 1982. The government thus deviated from the coalition agreement (a 1 percent decrease in 1982) on this point and also abandoned the intention of a decrease to 6.5 percent in this year. The consequence of these decisions was an increase in the level of rates and taxes, also at variance with the coalition agreement. This deviation from the agreement did not however, generate new conflict between the parties.

The concept version of the *Voorjaarsnota* mentioned the 'solidarity levy'. Maintaining the coupling between wages and social benefits was seen as politically important, which was in accordance with the coalition agreement. At the same time, however, the real income of the 'minima' would decrease by nearly 2 percent if no additional measures were taken. This was in contradiction to an explicit compromise in the coalition agreement which gave a maximum decrease of 1 percent. The basis of agreement within the government was thus a policy package containing major concessions from all the parties (especially the CDA and PvdA). This agreement could easily be disrupted by any change in one of the components of the package.

Failure as the definitive outcome

Economic developments continued to form an important constraint on the government during the discussions on the definitive version of the *Voorjaarsnota*. The ministers of the PvdA asked for more clarity about the way in which the government would protect the 'minima' against further decreases in spending power. With regard to financial resources for the employment plan, the minister of Finance said that the only way to find money was by increasing cutbacks in other fields of spending. This was rejected by the ministers of the PvdA, who declared that the only cuts they were willing to support were cuts in the defence budget.

In early May, discussions in parliament on a revision of the Health Insurance Act

as one way to make cuts in the field of health were broken off. Continued pressure from the trade unions to undo an increase in premiums for employees meant that the CDA and D66 gave up hope that a revision of the Act would really lead to the intended decrease in costs and spending. Facing the risk of a defeat in the Second Chamber, Den Uyl proposed deferral of the parliamentary discussions, which was accepted by the leaders of the parliamentary groups. This however did not mean that the issue was removed from the agenda, at least not to the Christian Democrats, and certainly not to the prime minister. In Van Agt's view, the government was to find an alternative, and so he proposed extra cuts of 500 million, on which he called a vote in the cabinet held on 11 May. The CDA and D66 voted for the proposal, but the PvdA voted against and subsequently withdrew from the government, eight months after it was sworn in (and even more shortly after it had presented itself to parliament), and with this the government fell.

Other arrangements on socio-economic policy

Given this short term in office, the question arises, what happened about other arrangements on issues that had been controversial during government formation? Within the field of socio-economic policy, not all arrangements had been dealt with at length when the coalition broke down. Despite the limited amount of time spent on other issues, the general implicit compromise on investment regulation had given rise to conflict. The issue of fiscal facilities for mortgagees was not dealt with.

School policy

The intention within the field of school policy was to set up experiments on a new type of school for which special legislation needed to be developed. In addition, the constitutional article on education had to be amended to prevent local governments depriving religious schools of financial resources. In January 1982, the government issued a note on the experiments with the new school type. This note was to form the basis of legislation. Though the government made a relatively 'quick start' on this issue, the fall of the government prevented the legislation, including a draft for a constitutional amendment, being submitted to parliament.

Nuclear policy

The coalition agreement contained an implicit compromise on the problem of the two nuclear power stations, which said that an expert committee was to report on the matter within six months, and that a decision on the nuclear power stations should follow the report. When the government fell, the committee had still not presented its report, and the issue was shelved. An unwritten rule of constitutional law in the Netherlands says that politically controversial decisions should not be taken during the incumbency of a caretaker government. The other arrangement on new nuclear power stations was that no decisions would be taken during the term of the Van Agt government. This at least was

something that did not form a problem for the coalition parties.

The arrangement on the deployment of cruise missiles contained an open ended postponement. The only clear cut point was that the government would inform its NATO partners that it would refrain from deciding on the issue in December 1981. Decision making on the cruise missiles and the existing military nuclear tasks would be based on the results of international disarmament talks in Geneva. These talks would start only at the end of November 1981, and no results were expected before the second half of 1982. There was no conflict on these issues during the life of the government.

SUCSESSES AND FAILURES OF THE VAN AGT II COALITION

It will have become clear from the discussion above that failure was more frequent and also politically more important than success. Let us consider the outcomes more systematically and relate these to the hypotheses on the three types of arrangements. The outcomes in terms of conflict and implementation are given in table 7.2.

Table 7.2
Outcomes of arrangements in Van Agt II coalition agreement

Outcome	Type of arrangement			
	explicit	procedural	implicit-general	
elaborated/implemented (no conflict)	1 (so-ec)	2 (nuc)	-	(3)
not elaborated/implemented (no conflict)	2 (fin,so-ec)	1 (nuc)	2 (so-ec,scho)	(5)
elaborated/implemented (conflict)	-	-	-	(-)
not elaborated/implemented (conflict)	2 (fin,so-ec)	-	5 (fin,so-ec)	(7)
	(5)	(3)	(7)	(15)

key to symbols:

so-ec = socio-economic policy fin = financial policy nuc = nuclear policy

The streamlining effect of explicit compromises

The first hypothesis was that explicit compromises are implemented peacefully, and thus smooth policy making within a coalition. This outcome however was the exception rather than the rule, as only one of the five explicit compromises (on the coupling of wages and social benefits) was implemented without involving conflict.

Two compromises were neither implemented nor did they become the object of dispute. The issue of fiscal facilities for mortgagees had not been dealt with when the government fell. The government deviated from the agreement to stabilise the level of rates and taxes by deciding to increase taxes in 1982. This decision was related directly to the parties' inability to reach agreement on the size and distribution of cuts in 1982. This is considered further below.

The explicit compromises on the budget deficit and on the spending power of the lowest income groups were not implemented and gave rise to conflict. Soon after the government took office, it became clear that the intended decrease of the deficit was no longer realistic and that the income situation of the 'minima' would deteriorate more than outlined in the agreement (a 2 percent instead of a 1 percent decrease in spending power). These developments however, did not mean that the coalition agreement was laid aside overnight. Indeed, conflict on these two issues contributed to the fall of the government.

The freezing effect of procedural arrangements

With regard to procedural arrangements, the hypothesis was that these prevent the re-emergence of conflict on the relevant issues. This was also the outcome of the three procedural arrangements that had been formulated, though one arrangement was actually not implemented. This arrangement stated that an expert committee was to report on the effects of closing down the two existing nuclear power stations in the Netherlands within six months, but this had not been done when the government broke down. The other procedural arrangements were also on nuclear policy, and both were observed. Thus, by formulating procedural arrangements, the parties had removed nuclear policy from the agenda. We should realise that the government collapsed on other issues even before nuclear policy, given the content of the arrangements, could become the object of controversy.

The boomerang effect of general implicit compromises

Arrangements which only mentioned general or even vague intentions were expected to appease rather than to resolve conflict and were also expected less often to lead to

substantive decisions in line with the 'spirit' of the coalition agreement than explicit compromises.

This type of arrangements was never elaborated successfully by the Van Agt II coalition. Two arrangements did not give rise to conflict and were also not implemented. These concerned fiscal facilities for mortgagees and school policy.

The most typical outcome of general arrangements was conflict that paralysed policy making (5 out of 7 cases). These arrangements were all on financial/budgetary matters and income policy. The basic point of controversy was the setting of priorities, which in the view of the PvdA was to be an active employment policy involving spending, whereas the CDA insisted on drastic cutbacks. These incompatible preferences led to a situation of stalemate which lasted until a formal vote on the size of cuts was held in the cabinet. The result of what had become essentially a zero sum game was defeat for the PvdA, which immediately withdrew from the government.

To the PvdA, the small base of support for developing the employment plan meant that the coalition had lost its *raison d'être*. Within the CDA, an influential group led by prime minister Van Agt seems to have been intransigent because it made a different calculation: the subsequent elections were likely to bring a coalition with the Liberals within sight and such a coalition was much preferred to continued cooperation with the PvdA. From this perspective, a government crisis formed an opportunity rather than a threat. This underlines the notion that 'failure' as the outcome of the implementation process may not be a failure for all the parties involved.

This does not change the conclusion that developments in the Van Agt II coalition sustain the view that general implicit compromises do not prevent conflict effectively. The outcomes are also in line with the expectation that this type of arrangement is often less successfully elaborated than explicit compromises.

The overall outcomes are presented in table 7.3. Clearly, the coalition agreement was not functional in terms of policy predefinition (only 3 arrangements were implemented, of which only one contained substantive intentions). Though the frequency of conflict as an outcome was not particularly high (7 out of 15), the conflicts which did arise were intense and had a long duration, or re-emerged several times. Moreover, in a paradoxical way, the early breakdown of the coalition meant that in a number of cases there was an absence of conflict, as not all issues were dealt with.

Table 7.3
Success and failure of the Van Agt II coalition

		implementation	
		+	-
conflict	-	3	5
	+	-	7

FACTORS EXPLAINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE

What were the causes of failure? The factors considered in this study are concerned with the characteristics of a coalition, individual parties, a government and the economic context within which these coalition governments operate. These different factors are seen to form favourable or unfavourable conditions for the enforcement of a coalition agreement.

The low rate of implementation was due partly to the early breakdown of the Van Agt II coalition. Excluding the arrangements which were not implemented because the fall of the government (and no other reason) prevented this, there are 10 arrangements left for consideration in this section. The area of school policy is not considered (there was one arrangement which was still at the stage of elaboration when the government fell). The associations between factors and outcomes are given in table 7.4. These associations may have been more or less 'strong' but must represent at least half of the arrangements considered in this section. As in the preceding case studies, the representations given in table 7.4 are only meant to give general indications.

Table 7.4
Association between factors and outcomes in the Van Agt II coalition²

factor	policy field		
	finance/ budget	socio- economic	nuclear power/arms
coalition size	(+ +)	(+)	o
internal party unity	--	-	o
negotiators in government	o	o	o
prime ministerial support	o	o	+
coalition committees	--	-	o
personal relationships	--	--	o
economic situation	--	--	o

key to symbols:

+ + or + direct association between factor and success
-- or - direct association between factor and failure
o no association found
n.a. not assessed (no indication presence or absence factor)

Coalition size and reciprocal control

One assumption is that in multiparty coalitions arrangements are less likely to be implemented because reciprocal control is reduced. The complexity of interparty relationships in multiparty coalitions was expected to make 'disloyal' behaviour by individual parties more likely. The incentive for such disloyal behaviour was seen to lie in the distribution of payoffs from policy bargaining. Given that payoffs from individual arrangements are never really equal for all parties, there will often be at least one party that 'regrets' the concessions made when the matter reaches the agenda, though this need not mean that the party is no longer willing to compromise. When there are three or more parties, such second thoughts are more likely to occur and it may also be that a second party supports modifications of an arrangement made during government formation.

Given the frequency of failure (7 out of 10 arrangements were not implemented) and the multiparty character of the Van Agt II coalition, these two variables can be seen to be associated in the way assumed. Does this really mean that the presence of a third party made a difference to the outcomes? Here, we could argue that D66 as the third party, rather than the other two, which were both necessary for a majority, had not profiled itself in the areas of financial and socio-economic policy as strongly as the CDA

² See the appendix for more detailed findings on the coalition.

and PvdA. In these fields especially, the Liberals Democrats often took a position carefully between the CDA and the PvdA, and we might say that this weakened reciprocal control between the two larger parties.³

The question, however, is whether in the process of enforcing arrangements (which mostly contained few payoffs for any party) the role of D66 as the third party in the coalition was so important. In fact, it seems to have been less the number of parties *per se* than the structure of the agenda set by these parties which meant that reciprocal control was not an effective enforcement mechanism. The agenda contained largely incompatible preferences, which were to be dealt with simultaneously. The parties expected few payoffs from other issues, in part because in other areas arrangements were often procedural rather than substantive. This is likely to have demotivated the parties to compromise on the central issues.

The internal unity of coalition parties

Another assumption was that manifest intraparty divisions in the relevant fields hinder the implementation of arrangements in these fields. In the Van Agt II coalition, manifest divisions within the parties that may have influenced the policy making process appear to have existed only within the CDA. This party was the result of a merger of three previously separate religious parties in 1980. The manifest programmatic rivalry between those preferring a 'truly progressive' policy and a more conservative group (which cut across the religious groups) seems to have been more directly relevant to the central issues. This division had been a major source of trouble in the preceding CDA-VVD coalition government. As we saw in the first section of this chapter, during the formation of the present government the leadership of the CDA was unable to conceal internal differences; the coalition agreement was not really supported by the whole parliamentary group. Internal dissent was especially strong over socio-economic policy and the cruise missiles issue.

The presence of internal party divisions within the CDA went hand in hand with failure in the fields of financial and socio-economic policy (7 out of 8 relevant cases). These were the fields in which the most substantive (if also vague) intentions were formulated. Arrangements on nuclear policy were implemented despite conflict within the CDA during government formation. Despite this, even if the CDA was split over socio-economic policy, the impact of this factor should not be overestimated and seems to have been relatively limited when compared to the two Belgian coalitions. The impact of this split is also limited when compared to the factors discussed below.

³ D66 supported cutbacks demanded by the CDA, but at the same time did not really oppose the PvdA's intentions on the employment plan.

Negotiators as ministers

At the level of the government, the third factor concerns the extent to which cabinet ministers with portfolios in relevant fields had participated directly in the government formation process. The assumption was that ministers with a background as a negotiator were more likely to guard the elaboration and implementation of arrangements than 'outsiders'. The Van Agt II government contained negotiators in the relevant fields of policy. The three party leaders had been very prominent in the negotiations, especially on financial and socio-economic policy, and they were also included in the informal socio-economic cabinet committee, nicknamed the 'pentagon'. In the fields of nuclear policy and education, some but not all ministers had been negotiators; the minister of defence was an outsider.

The factor of ministerial background however is related negatively rather than positively to outcomes; the assumed relationship was found in 2 out of the 10 cases. The implicit compromise on cruise missiles (defence policy) was one of the few implemented arrangements. With respect to the other cases, the common 'spirit' that the party leaders took with them into office was of the inflammable variety. In this sense, ministerial experience during government formation was counterproductive for the Van Agt II coalition.

Prime ministerial support

What was the role of the prime minister? Van Agt withdrew from the negotiations on the coalition agreement in August 1981. Intraparty and interparty tensions led to this decision. Once in office he was barely able to conceal his dissatisfaction with the coalition agreement and his actual dislike of the whole coalition. Hence he did not support the elaboration and implementation of arrangements actively; precisely where arbitration was most necessary, Van Agt firmly expressed the view of the conservative group within the CDA. In doing so, he increasingly came to stand against Den Uyl, the vice prime minister and party leader of the PvdA. Because of this, we may conclude that the absence of prime ministerial support, often in fact active opposition, contributed to the failure of the coalition when implementing the coalition agreement.

Coalition committees

Were informal coalition committees relevant to the implementation, or rather the nonimplementation, of the coalition agreement? The assumption was that informal committees containing prominents from different sections of the parties would facilitate

the enforcement of the coalition agreement. At the beginning of the government's term there was an intermezzo during which policy making was shifted back to the government formation arena. After a month in which several attempts were made to specify the coalition agreement, the problems re-emerged within the government and became concentrated increasingly within the socio-economic 'pentagon'. This informal cabinet committee contained the party leaders which, as said, were in charge of portfolios in the field of socio-economic policy, but it was not a coalition committee in actual sense. As Andeweg has pointed out, the 'pentagon' of the Van Agt II government had nothing to do with defence policy but everything to do with party political warfare (1985: 150).

Further, contacts between ministers and other sections of the parties were maintained separately within the three parties. These contacts often took the form of pressure upon the relevant ministers to stand firm in policy bargaining. The PvdA party executive took every chance to emphasise that the party's ministers should first and foremost be faithful to the election manifesto.

Thus, in the case of the Van Agt II coalition, there was no really informal arena in which tensions within the government, especially within the 'pentagon', could be reduced. This feature was typical of the Van Agt II government, and it seems to have contributed to its failure.

The economic situation

The economic forecasts on which the coalition agreement had been founded were soon felt to be too optimistic. Though there were few specific intentions, the new economic 'facts' gave rise to interparty conflict in the attempts to elaborate implicit compromises on financial and socio-economic policy. In fact, as the consequences of the second international oil crisis became visible, the CDA and PvdA took this situation as a reason to insist even more strongly on realising their own policy preferences and because of this the failure of the government may, at least in part, be attributed to these unfavourable economic conditions.

Personal relationships

The central factor in journalistic accounts of the Van Agt II government seems to have been the troubled personal relationship between prime minister Van Agt and vice prime minister Den Uyl. For these two heavyweights, political and personal conflicts went hand in hand. Since both party leaders were involved directly in policy making in the field of budgetary and socio-economic policy, this factor is likely to have had a negative influence on the process of elaboration of the coalition agreement, and indeed seems to have

contributed strongly to the early fall of the government.

CONCLUSION

The Van Agt II government emerged from a coalition formation process in which party political constraints were important. Due to these constraints, in particular the exclusion of particular party combinations, the CDA and PvdA were stuck with each other. D66 became the third coalition party, something which was preferred by the two other parties; the CDA and the PvdA expected that the participation of D66 would weaken the other party's position in the government.

Policy bargaining took place in four distinct fields, the typical result being implicit compromises which either contained procedural statements or general or indeed vague intentions on issues (10 were implicit, and only 5 were explicit). This meant that in most areas and especially on financial and socio-economic issues, further bargaining was necessary, at least if the government was to take substantive decisions.

The possibilities for implementing policy intentions directly were thus limited by the often general or ambiguous character of arrangements. Sometimes, the intentions were even contradictory. In accordance with the hypothesis on general implicit compromises, conflict was frequent and relatively more frequent than in the case of explicit compromises (5:7 against 2:5). This contrasts with the outcomes of procedural arrangements, which in confirmation with the hypothesis did not give rise to conflict (though we should note that there were relatively few procedural arrangements). When considering all arrangements, conflict was not the most frequent outcome, which in part was because some matters had been dealt with when the government fell, but the 'boomerang effect' of general arrangements was so strong that coalitional decision making in the important areas of financial and socio-economic policy was entirely paralysed.

In terms of policy prefiguration, the coalition agreement was even less functional, this was so with respect to both explicit and general implicit compromises (only one explicit compromise was implemented). The arrangements that were implemented were mostly procedural (2:3). The extremely short duration of the government is one (indirect) reason why a number of arrangements was not elaborated; matters were sometimes not even dealt with. More often, however, failure in this respect was either because the parties deviated from the coalition agreement or because conflict on the arrangements hindered their implementation.

The factors that are likely to have contributed to failure in the areas of financial and socio-economic policy are the absence of coalition committees, the lack of prime ministerial support for the financial/budgetary and socio-economic section in the coalition

agreement and especially economic developments and the highly strained personal relationship between the party leaders of the two major parties. As the personal tensions were between ministers who had both been prominent during government formation (they were after all party leaders), the factor of ministerial background had an effect that was the opposite of what was assumed. Intraparty divisions might be a potential source of difficulties, but this factor was not manifest in the Van Agt II coalition. Outcomes in the field of nuclear policy, which were more positive, are more difficult to relate to these or other factors. Here, however, it must be realised that the number of arrangements was rather small; two arrangements were considered in this section.

Another factor which must be seen in conjunction with the unfavourable conditions at the level of the government and the economic environment is the structure of the coalitional agenda, rather than the number of coalition parties. Payoffs from arrangements were typically very low for the two major parties, in part because there were few clear cut intentions. The incompatibility of demands that was concealed in the implicit compromises meant that expectations of actual policy payoffs were also low. The PvdA became increasingly unwilling to compromise as realisation of a number of central party goals mentioned in the election manifesto became less likely. At the same time the CDA saw the prospect of a coalition with the Liberals after new elections. This is another likely reason why not only the elaboration of arrangements, but also the coalition foundered.

8

The Lubbers I Coalition (1982-1986)

A TWO PARTY COALITION

After the Van Agt II government had broken down in May 1982, there was a caretaker government composed of the CDA and D66 until elections were held in September 1982. Perhaps the most surprising result of these elections was that the PvdA and not the CDA became the largest party (47 against 45 seats). In the provincial elections held six months earlier, the PvdA had suffered heavy losses and had become the third largest party after the CDA and VVD. In the run up to the parliamentary elections, the CDA had emphasised that the biggest party should take the initiative in government formation, so the PvdA was required to supply a *formateur* or *informateur*. Another remarkable, but more expected, result was the decline of D66 (from 17 back to 6 seats) and the success of the VVD which went from 26 to 36 seats. Though in the Netherlands elections are typically weak predictors of who will participate in the next government, with the VVD gaining this electoral victory it was possible to form a CDA-VVD majority government. Such a two party government would control 54 percent of the seats in the Second Chamber.

The formation process

The first step into the process of government formation was, however, the appointment of a PvdA *informateur* on 10 September 1982. In contrast to the formation of the Van Agt II government some 16 months earlier, there was only one party political constraint which limited the number of viable coalitions. This constraint was that the PvdA refused to form a coalition with the CDA and VVD. Given the election results of the four main parties and the general constraint that a majority government had to be formed, six different

coalitions were possible.¹ Experiences within the previous government, however, followed by a polarised election campaign, meant that a coalition including both the CDA and PvdA was not a viable alternative. The new parliamentary leader of the VVD, Ed Nijpels, openly expressed his preference for a coalition between the CDA and VVD. Though the outgoing prime minister Van Agt and the leader of the CDA's parliamentary group Lubbers were more cautious about making statements on future cooperation, it was sufficiently clear that the VVD would be more than just a discussion partner of the CDA and because of this an attempt to form a government that included the PvdA was not likely to be successful.

This did not prevent the PvdA *informateur* from discussing policy issues with the parliamentary leaders of the four parties, but Nijpels from the VVD withdrew after a few days. On the agenda were financial and socio-economic policy and the nuclear weapons issue, which as we have seen had been the primary source of conflict between Christian Democrats and Social Democrats over the preceding 18 months. The *informateur* made different proposals, which were rejected by the CDA as being 'too much the same story' as the previous Van Agt II coalition. This brought about the end of the first formation attempt, which in the eyes of some prominents within the parliamentary group of the VVD had been little more than a ritual dance (KHA, 1982: 737).

A second formation attempt

It is difficult to tell with certainty whether or not the CDA used the first round of discussions to remove the PvdA from the formation table, but there can be little doubt that the decision to conduct negotiations with the VVD was taken fairly quickly. The invitation to the VVD was made officially by the new *informateur*. On 4 October 1982, the *informateur* started discussions with spokespersons from the CDA and VVD. D66 had earlier declared that it would not participate immediately in the formation talks but await the results of the negotiations. A CDA-VVD coalition would have a parliamentary basis of 54 percent of the seats and be minimal winning. A few years before, a coalition having the same party composition (the first Van Agt government, 1977-1981) became vulnerable due to the presence of dissidents within the parliamentary group of the CDA. These dissidents also divided the party on nuclear policy in the Van Agt II coalition, but during the 1982 formation, the party leadership declared that party discipline would be maintained firmly.

Part of the formation agenda was dealt with by two work groups, composed of three spokespersons from the parliamentary groups. Several top civil servants also participated in the discussions. Financial and socio-economic policy was discussed in what was called 'work group A'. Work group B dealt with social and welfare policy, including

¹ These coalitions were: CDA-PvdA, CDA-PvdA-D66, CDA-VVD, CDA-VVD-D66, PvdA-VVD, and PvdA-VVD-D66.

education and media (broadcasting) policy and ethical issues. This work group was presided over by the outgoing minister of Education (CDA), who had also taken a seat in the Second Chamber since the elections.² The two work groups were to report before 9 October 1982, 12:00 hours. The two parliamentary leaders would then have two days to list those matters on which further negotiations were necessary. During the same period, the *informateur* and the two parliamentary leaders dealt with the headlines for financial and socio-economic policy and with foreign/defence policy.

Conflicts on policy became manifest within the two work groups. Work group A (financial and socio-economic policy) was unable to report before the deadline and presented the results of the negotiations three days late. There were also conflicts within work group B (social and welfare policy), which presented its report in time, but arrangements in different fields were rather general or even ambiguous. The party delegations had been unable to reach substantial agreement on secondary education, broadcasting policy and on legislation on euthanasia and prohibition of discrimination. The party spokespersons made mutual accusations with regard to obstructing the government formation process. Indeed, compared with earlier cases of coalition negotiations between Christian Democrats and Liberals (1967, 1971, 1977), the degree of interparty mistrust seems to have been high.

A draft version of the coalition agreement was made public on 19 October 1982. The *informateur* noted that the document contained primarily those matters on which major differences between the parties had become manifest (HTK, 1982-83, 17555/7). The results of discussions between the party leaders of the work group reports were also incorporated in this document. The parliamentary groups, however, were not satisfied with the results, so that another round of negotiations was necessary. In these negotiations, Van Agt withdrew and was replaced by Ruud Lubbers, which implied that there was a new candidate for the office of prime minister. D66 found the results sufficiently incompatible with its own preferences that it decided to stay outside the new government.

On 26 October, the final version of the coalition agreement was completed. This document contained numerous changes and also several entirely new paragraphs, for which especially CDA leader Lubbers had pressed. The leader of the Liberals in parliament had received *carte blanche*; the parliamentary group of the VVD would automatically approve the coalition agreement after it was signed by the party leader. After Lubbers had presented and explained the text, the CDA group also approved the coalition agreement.

The final point to be discussed was the distribution of cabinet portfolios, on which agreement was reached relatively easily. The CDA obtained 8 seats in the cabinet and the

² This combination of a seat in the cabinet and in parliament at one and the same time is possible in the Netherlands until a new government is sworn in.

VVD 6. To reduce the likelihood of party political difficulties which had so much troubled and shortened the life of the previous government, the portfolios of finance and social affairs & employment were allocated to one party, the CDA. On 30 October 1982, the *informateur* reported officially to the Queen and on the same day CDA leader Lubbers was appointed as *formateur*, presenting his government on 4 November 1982. The formation process had taken less than two months, the shortest government formation period since 1967 which nonetheless resulted in the longest coalition agreement ever in the Netherlands. This underlines that contrary to what is often believed, no relationship exists between the length of the formation process and the length of the coalition agreement.

General features of the coalition agreement

Again, the coalition agreement had reached an unprecedented length of some 18,500 words. The agreement consisted of three documents: the actual coalition agreement and the reports of the work groups A and B after these had been amended by the parliamentary groups. There were 44 paragraphs, in which such different matters as budget cuts, legislation on the prohibition of discrimination, environmental protection, the budget deficit, broadcasting policy, development aid, and drugs policy were dealt with. Unlike previous coalition agreements, there was no introductory paragraph underlining the parties' commitment to the agreement; only in report A was there a note saying that those obtaining a cabinet portfolio were expected to commit themselves to the report (HTK, 1982-83, 17555/7: 38).

CONFLICTS, ARRANGEMENTS, AND POLICY MAKING

From conflicts to arrangements

Financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy

The summer of 1982 brought heavy weather for the Dutch economy. Unemployment had risen to a postwar record, investments were running back, and the budget deficit had risen to more than 11 percent of the national income. Given the state of the economy, no party denied that a policy of retrenchment was needed in the coming years. When, however, this general point of agreement had to be translated into more specific policy choices, the Christian Democrats and Liberals presented different viewpoints at the formation table. These viewpoints were sufficiently conflictual to require substantial bargaining before a joint policy programme could be issued. There were manifest conflicts over the size and

distribution of cuts in government expenditure, and on several items of income and tax policy. Finally, there were manifest differences between the parties on the profile of a new Postbank.

Cuts in governmental expenditures Financial and socio-economic policy was discussed in work group A, which as said was composed of three specialists from the two parties. The general point of departure of the work group was an annual growth rate of 3 percent. This was the average of a high (4 percent) and a low (2 percent) growth scenario made by the Central Economic Committee (CEC), a standing committee of top civil servants. The CEC however believed that the low scenario was the more realistic (Toirkens, 1988: 106).

A first point of disagreement was the size of cuts in government expenditure over the next four years. The VVD was most radical in this respect, as it demanded cuts of 40 billion over the next four years (NRC, 10 Oct. 1982). The CDA on the other hand found that the Liberals were putting too much emphasis on cutbacks. The only clear intention of the CDA was to decrease the budget deficit by 1 percent each year.

Negotiations within work group A resulted in several explicit compromises. To begin with cuts would be Dfl. 13 billion in 1983 and 7 billion each year in the period 1984-86, the total cuts would thus be 34 billion. This entailed a concession from the VVD. At the same time, however, report A stipulated that this was a scenario which would only apply if annual wage increases were restrained to 2.5 percent. If the social partners were not prepared to restrain wage increases, total cuts in the four year period would be 43 billion, 13 billion in 1983, and 10 billion in each following year. This 'high scenario' benefited the VVD, so that the arrangement contained payoffs for both parties.

The distribution of cuts would be as follows: social security and wages public sector 35 percent, departmental budgets 20 percent and health 10 percent.³ If an annual wage restraint was realised, annual cuts in each of the sectors would be 2 billion, except in the area of health, in which cuts would be 1 billion. Without wage restraint, annual cuts in social security and public sector wages would increase to 3.5 billion. These cuts were to result in a decrease in the budget deficit by 1 percent each year, leading to a deficit of 7.5 percent in 1986.

Further, there was an explicit and indeed very detailed compromise on cutbacks in departmental budgets for the period 1984-1986, however, the possibility to re-allocate part of the specified cuts over the different ministries was also included. One condition was that at each department would carry out at least 60 percent of the cuts originally allocated to that department, and another condition was that the total size of cuts would remain unchanged. Spending on public sector wages would be decreased by cutting down on

³ The total national budget thus consisted of spending on social security, public sector wages, health, interest payments and what was referred to as the departmental budgets (which included all expenses except in the aforementioned sectors).

departmental staff by one percent each year, with the exception of the police and the tax office. Filling the nature of cuts in the other sectors was left largely to the government. The agreement only mentioned that to realise cutbacks in social security the government had to revise the system of social security, or to develop an anti fraud policy. Finally, the parties agreed explicitly to stabilise the general percentage of rates and taxes (*collectieve lastendruk*) and to decrease rates and taxes for the private sector by between 1.5 and 2 billion annually and to spend 750 million each year to stimulate employment, for example by initiating vocational training projects.

Income and tax policy The parties also disagreed on income and tax policy. Differences which involved party principles, such as the coupling of social benefits to minimum wages and the issue of income levelling were highly problematic. Conflicts on income and tax policy contained the elements of principle and contingency.

To begin with, the CDA advocated the maintenance of the coupling of social benefits to the official minimum wage, whereas in the view of the Liberals the government should 'decouple' if it believed this was becoming too expensive. Moreover, the VVD argued in favour of a reduction of 5 percent in the minimum wage and social benefits. Though the Christian Democrats also intended to revise the social security system, such drastic decreases in social benefits were rejected as being impossible to sell to the country. A general implicit compromise was reached on the coupling issue. It stated that no relevant instrument for the reduction of spending on social security would be excluded in advance, which meant that the coupling mechanism could also be abandoned.

Another controversial point was the levelling of incomes. According to the CDA, there could a levelling of incomes above Dfl. 60,000, but the VVD argued in favour of a much higher limit, to prevent differences between lower and middle incomes being further reduced. This was a point on which the VVD had long profiled itself. As on the previous issue, the parliamentary leaders agreed on a rather vague arrangement which said that there were 'limited possibilities' for income levelling, without mentioning whether or not the government would decide to level incomes. As nothing was said about the limit preferred by the CDA, the final arrangement was a typical general implicit compromise.

A final issue was income tax for couples with two incomes. There were two different approaches to levying such double income couples. In the first, advocated by the VVD, only the individual income was taken into account, with the tax regime being the same for any individual tax payer. In the other approach promoted by the CDA, the financial strength of couples was taken as the point of departure. This conflict could only be removed from the negotiation table by formulating a general implicit compromise which mentioned only that the government was to develop a system in which both principles would be recognised.

The postbank A next point of controversy regarded the postbank, a new bank for giro

money transactions. There was a bill dating from 1976, when a centre left government was in office. That bill contained instructions for the establishment of a state owned postbank, but it had never been discussed in parliament. The Liberals preferred a 'minimal' postbank, the competences of which would be limited to the financial services provided thusfar. In the view of the CDA, the postbank was to develop the same main activities as the commercial banks.

A general implicit compromise was made by the parliamentary leaders. The government was to define its position once the Second Chamber had discussed the existing bill. If the parliamentary discussions were delayed or important changes were thought necessary, provisional legislation was to be passed to secure a continuation of the existing national institutions for money transactions.

Nuclear policy

The nuclear weapons conflict was left unresolved by the previous government. As the pressure from the NATO partners was increasing, the general feeling was that the new government could no longer postpone a decision on the cruise missiles issue. One problem was that the issue divided the CDA. For this reason, it was not immediately obvious that an agreement could be reached easily with the VVD, a party that advocated firmly the deployment of cruise missiles and conformity to NATO policy in general.

The issues was dealt with by the parliamentary leaders, who made a procedural arrangement that stated that the government would postpone the decision on the deployment of cruise missiles while at the same time making preparations to build the facilities needed for deployment. This was thought necessary to remain credible to the NATO partners. First, however, the Second Chamber was to have 'the opportunity to give its opinion', which left some to wonder whether or not the parliamentary groups would have a free vote on the issue (NRC, 4 November 1982). With regard to existing nuclear military tasks, a general implicit compromise was made which said that the government would specify its position before the beginning of the new parliamentary year in September 1983. It was expected that by then more clarity over the cruise missile situation would exist. Until this time, the status quo would be maintained with respect to existing nuclear tasks (Nederlandse Staatscourant, 28 October 1982; KHA, 1982: 740).

Media policy

With regard to television broadcasting, there were fundamental differences between the VVD and CDA which dated back to the mid-1960s, when a coalition of these parties had broken down over the same issue. Here, the VVD here was the change oriented party. The Liberals advocated strongly a liberalisation of broadcasting policy, to accomplish a 'breakthrough' in the traditional pillarised and noncommercial Dutch system. In the view of the Liberals, commercial broadcasting should be possible at national level as well as on a local and regional basis. The VVD also demanded that foreign commercial stations be

given access to the cable network. In contrast, the Christian Democrats defended the traditional broadcasting system, in which the religious pillars (*zuilen*) were represented strongly. The CDA feared that liberalisation would in reality mean plain commercialisation. Foreign commercial broadcasting oriented on the Dutch public was rejected firmly. The three central points of conflict were (1) the admission of foreign television programmes to the Dutch cable network, (2) the possibility of advertising on local and regional stations and (3) financing an extension of national television broadcasting.

One possibility for the parties was simply to leave things open. Though in this case the CDA could theoretically form a legislative majority in parliament with the PvdA, the Christian Democrats were not really waiting to be driven in the arms of this party. Moreover, it was unlikely that the VVD would ever accept such a manoeuvre. In fact, the leader of the VVD emphasised that his party wanted clarity on the issue before the government took office (NRC Handelsblad, 12 October 1982).

Foreign transmissions Negotiations on the access of foreign television programmes to the Dutch cable network resulted in an explicit compromise. Until the government could present its view on the problem, no foreign programmes with advertisements directed towards the Dutch public would be allowed. In an earlier version of the arrangement foreign programmes which 'formed a threat to national security, public order or public morality' were also banned, but this restriction had been removed under pressure from the parliamentary group of the VVD.

Local and regional broadcasting Another conflict was over the question whether local and regional broadcasting could be financed through advertising. In the view of the CDA, the financing of local broadcasting should be through local taxes exclusively. The VVD advocated the introduction of local and regional advertising under the auspices of what in the Netherlands is known as the *STER* (*Stichting Ether Reclame*), a foundation for the broadcasting of advertisements.

The coalition agreement contained an implicit compromise which stated that 'if regional and local advertising appear not to be feasible', public resources at a local level were to be used, with the possibility of a supplement from the radio and television licence fees collected centrally. What exactly was meant by 'not feasible' was left open. This was a provisional solution, until the governmental had formulated its long-term policy on the issue.

The extension of national broadcasting Finally, the parties had different views on the financing of an extension of national broadcasting. The points of conflict were, first, the conditions for an increase in air time for the *STER* (advertising) and second, the question whether or not radio and television licence fees should be increased. The CDA advocated

such an increase, but the VVD opposed it as being another national intervention in broadcasting. With regard to advertising through the STER, the Christian Democrats had more strict conditions, such as no advertising in 'floating blocks' interrupting programmes and on Sundays.

Bargaining resulted in an implicit compromise which stated that an extension of national broadcasting would 'in principle' be financed exclusively through increased revenues from advertising under the auspices of the STER. Though at first sight this constituted a gain to the VVD, ambiguity was brought in by the statement that if revenues from this extended advertising alone were not sufficient, an increase in licence fees would be considered. Increased revenues from advertising were to be achieved by a gradual increase in air time for the STER. The conditions were those mentioned by the CDA, which entailed a concession from the VVD.

School policy

As during the formation of the Van Agt II government, the issue of secondary education reform was a source of dispute. Though the CDA certainly did not promote the abolition of the existing school system in the short term (this after all was something on which conflict with the PvdA had existed), the party preferred to continue discussions and experiments with a new school type between primary and secondary education. If these experiments were successful, the Christian Democrats would support the general introduction of the new system. The VVD had many difficulties with the more 'egalitarian' type of school and for this reason demanded that the scale of the experiments be limited.

Two implicit compromises were made. One general arrangement mentioned the continuation of discussions and experiments and announced a special bill on the financing of these experiments, which was to be submitted to parliament. To warrant the (financial) equality of public and private (religious) schools, the constitutional article on education would be amended. This last part of the arrangement was taken from the coalition agreement of the previous government, in which as we know, the CDA's partners were the PvdA and D66, the other two secular parties. The second arrangement was procedural and contained a postponement of a decision on the general introduction of the new school type until after the next elections, or in any case until in the second half of the 1980s.

Ethical issues: euthanasia and equal treatment

The next issue that divided the prospective coalition parties was euthanasia. The question was whether or not the criminal law should include exceptions to leave euthanasia unsanctioned under certain conditions. The VVD, as did the other secular parties, advocated a relaxation in the penal law, whereas in the view of the CDA, euthanasia should never remain unpunished. The issue was a typical position issue, with the ethical principles held by the parties leaving little room for compromises. Yet the VVD raised the

issue to place it on the agenda of the new government.

This was all the Liberals obtained from the negotiations, as a general implicit compromise was formulated which said that the government would take a position after it was advised by a special commission on euthanasia. Until the government had defined its position, the status quo would be maintained.

Another ethical issue was equal treatment, on which a first draft of a bill had been completed in September 1981 by the first Van Agt government (CDA-VVD), which however had remained undiscussed during the term of the second Van Agt government. This first draft focused on the prohibition of sex discrimination, including that against homosexuals, but it was criticised heavily by the religious organisations, as the prohibition implied that religious schools could no longer refuse to employ or discharge homosexual teachers by referring to the traditional constitutional freedoms of religion, education, and assembly. Against this background, the CDA rejected special legislation, which in the party's view would only violate this constitutional right. The CDA suggested a revision of the penal law on the point of discrimination. The VVD demanded a special anti discrimination law and anticipated support on this matter from the other secular parties. On this issue also, the parties went no further than compromising implicitly. The general arrangement on the issue stated that the government would reconsider the first draft of the 1981 bill and formulate new legislation in which there 'might be' elements from the initial draft. Thus, on this issue also the more difficult task of formulating substantive policy was postponed until the coalition was in office.

The types of arrangements reached in the relevant fields of policy are given in table 8.1. Though the Lubbers I coalition agreement was generally considered to be the most specific and detailed coalition policy programme thusfar, implicit compromises and even only general implicit compromises, were relatively more frequent than explicit ones. In fact, as the table illustrates, explicit compromises were reached almost exclusively in the area of financial and budgetary policy.

Table 8.1
Arrangements in Lubbers I coalition agreement

policy field	type of arrangement			
	explicit	procedural	general	
financial/budgetary policy	6	-	1	7
socio-economic policy	1	-	5	6
media policy	1	-	2	3
nuclear policy	-	1	1	2
school policy	-	1	1	2
ethical issues	-	-	2	2
	8	2	12	22

From arrangements to policy making

Financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy

The coalition agreement contained arrangements which indicated or indeed stipulated in detail the size of cutbacks in different sectors over the next four years. Though arrangements were also made on ways to realise these cuts and to increase state revenues within a general constraint of a decrease in rates and taxes for the private sector.

Cuts in 1983 The first 'test' of the coalition agreement was the discussions on the *Voorjaarsnota* 1983, a white paper from the minister of finance giving the financial possibilities and impossibilities for the rest of the budgetary year that must be submitted to parliament in the first half of the year. The budget for 1983 had been made by the previous government and the minister of finance declared that the financial situation required more drastic cutbacks in the fields of social benefits, health and wages in the public sector, so that the budget deficit could be decreased in the way stated in the coalition agreement (Toirkens, 1988: 109). Before these problems occurred, the government had already made some changes in the distribution of cuts in the departmental budgets for 1984. The coalition agreement mentioned the possibility of re-allocating a certain part of the cuts in departmental budgets.

Expectations of new financial problems caused the minister of finance to demand 3.5 billion extra cuts in 1983, the explicit compromise made during government formation was for 13 billion. Agreement was reached on extra cuts of 2 billion and 3.5 billion in 1984. At variance with the coalition agreement, rates and taxes would be increased, which implied that the promised relief for private business would also not be realised (Toirkens, 1988: 111-112). One of the ways of realising these cuts was a decrease in social benefits

by 2 percent on 1 October 1983, for which a special bill had to be drafted. This decision was a specification of the general implicit compromise covering a decrease in social benefits.

These developments had consequences for income policy. Conflict broke out over the coupling of social benefits to wages, on which the coalition agreement contained a general and ambiguous implicit compromise. The CDA insisted that the coupling mechanism be maintained, a point on which the VVD gave way 'because in this early stage of the government this issue (was) not worth a government crisis' (KHA, 1983: 275-280, 343-344). As negotiations on public sector wages did not lead to an agreement, a precondition to measures in the sphere of social security, given the agreement to maintain the link between wages and social benefits, social benefits could not be decreased as originally intended (KHA, 1983: 452-453).

The *Voorjaarsnota* concerned retrenchment policy to a great extent; however, the government also discussed employment policy and the effects of retrenchment policy on spending power. With regard to employment policy, a specification was made for the way in which the 750 million guilders mentioned in the coalition agreement was to be spent. With regard to developments in spending power in 1983, the expectation was that those in the middle income brackets would be the worst off (minus 4 to 5 percent). This implied that the difference between middle and lower incomes would become smaller, which in the view of the VVD was a form of income levelling 'through the backdoor'. During the government formation process, the parties had made an implicit compromise on the issue of income levelling and conflict re-emerged at this point (KHA, 1983: 276-280).

During the parliamentary discussions on the *Voorjaarsnota*, conflict on the government's commitment to the coalition agreement broke out. According to the parliamentary leader of the CDA, the economic problems required a modification of the financial goals, especially for the budget deficit, in the agreement. His Liberal counterpart argued instead that the government should do something about the way to achieve its goals, and increase cutbacks (KHA, 1983: 344).

The 1984 budget This public skirmishing about the goals mentioned in the agreement formed the prelude to cabinet decision making for the budget for 1984. The first move was made by the minister of finance, who raised the alarm, pointing to the increasing financial gap. This was taken seriously by the prime minister, who proposed extra cuts, but also an increase in rates and taxes and very much against the wishes of the minister of finance, a less ambitious schedule for decreasing the deficit. The coalition agreement in this respect was not sacrosanct, at least not to the prime minister.

Between May and July 1983, discussions were held within the cabinet and the 'pentagon', the informal cabinet committee on socio-economic and financial policy. At stake were the size and allocation of extra cuts, or the extent to which the government could exceed the amounts of cuts mentioned in the coalition agreement. Agreement was

reached on an extra 3.8 billion cuts, with the total for cuts in 1984 becoming 10.8 billion. This was appreciably more than the 7 billion mentioned in the coalition agreement. When distributing the extra cuts, the emphasis would be on social security and public sector wages, where cuts were to be realised through a decrease in social benefits and public sector wages by 3 percent on 1 January 1984. In December, the bill containing these decreases was approved by the government majority in parliament.

In distributing the cuts over the different sectors, the ratio mentioned in the agreement was followed, at least as far as the 'predetermined' cuts were concerned. The extra cuts were allocated differently. Contrary to the priorities stated in the agreement, more emphasis would be given to a decrease in the level of rates and taxes and less to the reduction of the deficit in 1984. In fact, the deficit was expected only marginally to decrease (Toirkens, 1988: 113-122; KHA, 1983: 614-617).

In December 1983, a bill containing a new system of income tax for couples with two incomes was approved in parliament. This bill was initiated by the government, and was accepted by the cabinet without problems. The new system, to take effect on 1 January 1984, was a compromise between the two different approaches of the coalition partners (the VVD had preferred individual treatment, and the CDA the use of the principle of financial strength of households). The bill was not however intended to be definitive and a number of refinements were planned for the following year (KHA, 1984: 53). Thusfar, the elaboration of the implicit compromise on this issue was peaceful.

The 1985 budget The discussions over the budget for 1985 also started with conflict over the central goals mentioned in the coalition agreement. Indeed, it was the prime minister himself who proposed a change of priorities, his argument being that cuts should not only be used for reducing the budget deficit, but also for decreasing the level of rates and taxes for the population, even if this was not an intention mentioned in the coalition agreement. He believed that the legitimacy of a policy oriented exclusively on cuts to decrease the deficit was waning.

In the first half year of 1984, the question of priorities was an important agenda item in cabinet discussions. When it became clear that the budget deficit in 1983 would be lower than expected, the government decided that in 1985 there would be a general decrease of rates and taxes for the private sector, as promised in the coalition agreement. At the same time, there also would be extra cuts of 2.4 billion. At the end of August, the government reached agreement on a package consisting of an 0.8-percent reduction of the deficit, and 9.3 billion of cuts, of which the departmental budgets would bear the largest share (Toirkens, 1988: 122-129). Though no sector was charged less than indicated in the coalition agreement, the allocation of the extra cuts differed from the distribution ratio in the agreement (KHA, 1985: 38).

In September 1984, a bill containing the intended refinements to the income tax system was submitted in parliament and conflict broke out. The point of controversy was

the size of a personal tax allowance for employees. In the first version of the bill, the government had fixed this allowance at Dfl. 600 per month, but for budgetary reasons this was reduced to Dfl. 425. This decrease was a concession from the VVD. Once accepted, however, the CDA proposed a further decrease to Dfl. 350. An amendment containing this was introduced by the parliamentary group of the CDA and support was expected from the PvdA.

The chances of a legislative coalition between the CDA and PvdA on this issue were not high because the VVD took the matter very seriously. The parliamentary leader of the VVD refused to accept a further decrease in the allowance. The issue led to a 'cold war' between the two parliamentary leaders, who were not on speaking terms for some time. Within the government, the relationship between the two parties had also become strained. The VVD vice prime minister declared that he and his colleagues would resign if the CDA's amendment obtained a parliamentary majority. Prime minister Lubbers tried actively to settle the dispute and succeeded in early November. A new compromise was reached within the government, which was approved subsequently by the coalitional majority in parliament. In this compromise, the difference was split, literally, to the last decimal point, the allowance became Dfl. 387,50! (KHA, 1984: 774-777, 787-789).

The 1986 budget In early 1985, there was again conflict over priorities and the size of cuts. As before, the minister of finance demanded everything should be done to decrease the deficit. Other ministers preferred a decrease in the level of rates and taxes and a small reduction in the deficit. These two positions were taken along party lines, with the exception of the minister of finance, who stood on the side of the VVD, or actually the VVD stood at his side. In April 1985, a compromise was reached which contained extra cuts for 1986 of 1 billion guilders. Cutbacks in social security, public sector wages and health would follow the guidelines given in the coalition agreement. As far as possible, rates and taxes would be decreased and the budget deficit would be decreased less than the minister of finance had pressed for. After a few weeks, however, it became clear that without policy changes the deficit would again start to *increase* in 1986. This not only shocked the minister of finance but also other ministers, especially those of the VVD, and for this reason the government quickly agreed to increase its efforts to bring the deficit below 8 percent (KHA, 1986: 632).

Cuts or votes, 1986, the election year With parliamentary elections due in May 1986, the government faced the question whether or not to follow the line of cuts with regard to the 1987 budget. There were party political arguments for not doing so but at the same time there were several new urgent financial problems. An expected decrease in state revenues in 1986 was particularly relevant and an increase in the deficit was expected if no new cuts were made. This prospect did not please the coalition partners, especially since both were beginning to consider taking office for a further term of government.

In the view of the prime minister, the government had to decide on cuts before the elections but the ministers of the VVD appeared to have problems with such decisions being made before the elections. The Liberals feared that starting an election campaign and another retrenchment operation simultaneously would not make the party more popular with the voters and this was seen as a problem. Under pressure from the prime minister, however, the VVD gave way, and the result was a package of cuts amounting to 5 billion and an increase in rates and taxes (Toirkens, 1988: 136-141, 164).

When the government reached the end of its term in office, the budget deficit appeared to be 7.8 percent. This was very close to the agreed percentage of 7.5, so the coalition had achieved, if approximately, one of its central policy intentions (Toirkens, 1988: 176-177). An intention that remained unaccomplished however was a decrease in the size of the civil service by 2 percent annually. Words on this point were more successful than policy, as by the end of the government's term there seemed to be more people in government employed than when the government came into office (ibid).

The postbank The implicit compromise on the postbank was elaborated, the result being a bill which was approved in parliament in June 1985. The bill was based on a compromise in which the new postbank would be a private institution with limited competences.

Nuclear weapons policy

With regard to nuclear weapons, a procedural arrangement containing a postponement of the decision on cruise missiles was produced, along with a general arrangement on the existing nuclear military tasks.

In June 1983, the government took a decision about locating launching facilities for the cruise missiles. The Defence minister called this a technical decision, this simply followed on from the coalition agreement. The coalition parties, except for three dissidents within the CDA group, supported this decision in parliament.

In November, the government presented its long term overview of defence policy to parliament. This was later than announced in the coalition agreement, which stated that plans would be presented before the beginning of the new parliamentary year in September. Due to conflict over existing nuclear tasks, only the section on conventional weapons was completed (NRC, 24 June 1983; KHA, 1983: 662-664, 819).

Half a year later, on 1 June 1984, the government took a decision on the cruise missiles. The issue had been highly divisive within the CDA and also between the coalition partners. The decision was to postpone deployment by exactly one year, and the deployment of cruise missiles in the Netherlands was linked to Soviet deployment policy. Meanwhile, preparations at the military air basis would be continued, so that, in the case of a positive decision, the building of facilities could be started in January 1986. The existing nuclear tasks would be maintained until 1 January 1986 and then be reconsidered. The decision received the support of a majority in the Second Chamber, however, due to

the 'disloyal' vote of eight members of a group within the CDA, a majority could only be reached with the help of the small religious parties in the opposition (KHA, 1984: 369-372).

The decision gave rise to differences of interpretation. According to prime minister Lubbers, the decision implied that the Netherlands would not deploy missiles if the Soviet Union stopped deploying missiles on 1 June 1984. The leader of the VVD in parliament declared that in that case (which he thought was highly unlikely) the government still needed to determine its position (KHA, 1984: 436-440).

A year later, on 1 November 1985, the government decided to deploy the cruise missiles in line with its NATO partners. Two of the existing nuclear tasks would be dropped after the actual deployment of cruise missiles took place. As a compensation, pressed for by the VVD, conventional defence would be strengthened. This decision was also approved in parliament, but as before, the coalition parties needed the external support of the small religious parties to reach a majority (KHA, 1985: 750-753; 1986: 11). With parliamentary approval, the issue could be removed from the coalitional agenda.

Media policy

The government presented the *Medianota*, a document containing a mid term plan on media policy in mid-1983. This note was formulated without too many difficulties and this seems to have been mainly because the controversial issues were left vague. Using the *Medianota* as a basis, the government was expected to formulate a new media Act.

Transmissions from abroad In June 1984, the minister of Culture submitted a Royal Decree on cable television to the Second Chamber. This decree was a specification of a paragraph in the *Medianota* and covered the conditions for broadcasting via the Dutch cable network. One of these conditions was that there should be no subtitling of foreign programmes. When the decree was debated in parliament, the VVD pointed to the coalition agreement which was less restrictive in this respect and did not mention the point of subtitling. This view was supported by a parliamentary majority which included the PvdA but excluded the CDA (KHA, 1984: 579-580).

The extension of national broadcasting Conflict on the extension of national broadcasting broke out in the parliamentary discussions on the *Medianota*, which began in the autumn of 1983. The CDA advocated an increase in air time by creating a third noncommercial channel which would primarily contain cultural and educational programmes. The VVD opposed such a channel with the argument that there was little demand for a new public channel. The coalition agreement contained only general statements on a 'possible' extension of national broadcasting, depending on the financial possibilities. The debates did not lead to substantive results until March 1984 when the CDA group made an overture to the PvdA; both parties voted for a motion asking the government to consider

the possibility of a third channel. Though this was not (yet) a real legislative coalition, the VVD warned the CDA that it would not accept further disloyal behaviour.

In August 1985, the government decided to introduce a third channel, which was done to comply with the wishes of the parliamentary majority, including CDA and PvdA. In doing this, the threat (or opportunity) of a legislative coalition between the CDA and VVD was averted. To finance the third channel, advertising under the auspices of STER, the foundation for advertising in broadcasting, would be further extended. In confirmation to the arrangement in the coalition agreement, licence fees would only be increased if the revenues from this extra advertising were not sufficient. In contradiction to the arrangement, advertising would take place between programmes on the existing two national channels. During government formation, the parties had agreed that 'floating blocks' of advertisements (not preceding or immediately following after newsprogrammes) would not be allowed. Especially the CDA found such floating blocks a commercial element which should be kept away from public broadcasting. These decisions immediately preceded the submission of a bill on media policy to the Second Chamber in September 1985. When submitting the bill, the minister of Culture said the coalition parties in parliament should value the bill as the result of long and difficult discussions within the government (KHA, 1984: 689; 1985: 689-690).

Consensus within the government did not mean that homogeneity within the coalition as a whole was assured, rather the opposite was true. In early 1986, the two coalition parties in the Second Chamber began to question the contents of the bill. The VVD demanded wider possibilities for commercial television, something that was rejected systematically by the Christian Democrats. Conflict also broke out on the issue of 'floating blocks' of advertisements. If the VVD defended the governmental decision to allow advertising between separate programmes, the CDA pointed to the coalition agreement, which excluded this possibility unambiguously.

Local and regional broadcasting The was also conflict over regional and local advertising. The parliamentary group of the VVD argued that the coalition agreement did not exclude advertising in local and regional broadcasting but the CDA maintained that the bill on media policy, which excluded this possibility, was in keeping with the agreement. The problem actually revolved around the interpretation of one single word, which meant that the relevant statement could be read in two different ways.

The consequence of these problems was that the bill on media policy was not approved before the parliamentary elections in May 1986. The next opportunity for the parties to continue discussions on the issue would be during the formation of a new government (NRC, 30 January 1986; Beleid Beschouwd, February 1986; NRC, 12 March 1986).

School policy

On the issue of secondary education reform, the coalition agreement stipulated that the discussions and experiments would be continued and that a bill would be drafted by the government for this purpose. A definitive decision on introducing the new system would not be taken during the government's term in office.

In June 1983, conflict broke out between the minister of Education (CDA) and his Liberal state secretary on the scale of experiments with the new type of school. The coalition agreement stated only that these experiments with the new school would be continued, without mentioning the number of experiments that would be allowed. In the view of the state secretary, who was supported by the VVD in parliament, the number of experiments was beginning to expand beyond what was reasonable. The minister declared that he was observing the agreement that no definitive decisions would be taken before the next parliamentary elections (NRC, 24 June 1983; Beleid Beschouwd, July 1983).

In May 1984 the minister declared that legislation on the experiments, announced in the coalition agreement, would be completed before the end of the year. Due to disagreements on different elements of the bill, however, it was submitted in July 1985. The bill mentioned how the experiments would be financed and the objection made by the Liberals with regard to the increased scale of experimenting was appeased by the inclusion of a requirement that each year any new experiments were to be approved by the Second Chamber.

The bill was received by the parliamentary groups with mixed feelings. Those of the CDA were positive, the VVD commented that the government had followed its own interpretation of the agreement; this was certainly not in keeping with the Liberal view, and because of this, the parliamentary group of the VVD kept up the discussions on the bill, the consequence being that the bill was not approved before the parliamentary elections in May (Beleid Beschouwd, September 1985).

Ethical issues: euthanasia and equal treatment

The special commission on euthanasia published its report in August 1985, in which the relaxation of penal law under certain conditions was recommended. This advice, however, was not the only thing to be considered by the government. In April 1984, a private member's bill had been introduced by D66. The parliamentary groups of the coalition parties were as divided as ever in their reactions to the commission's advice and to the bill. At the same time, the views of the VVD and the PvdA were converging, but the CDA ministers declared that they would not accept a legislative alliance between the VVD and a number of opposition parties.

With the two responsible ministers (Health and Justice) belonging to different parties, the party political element in the conflict was also reinforced within the government. At the end of 1985, prime minister Lubbers stated that legislation on euthanasia should not be expected before the elections. In January 1986, the government

reached agreement on a first draft, which would however only be submitted to parliament if a majority really wanted legislation in the short term. Prime minister Lubbers preferred to shelve the issue. The parliamentary group of the CDA supported the first draft, as it was more restrictive than the private member's bill, while the VVD preferred the private member's bill. The parliamentary leader of the CDA reacted by complaining that:

The VVD seems to participate in two coalitions. One is the formal coalition with the CDA, in which the country's economic and financial problems are dealt with. The other is an informal coalition with the PvdA and D66, to strike deals on immaterial issues over the CDA's head. Euthanasia is just one example (...) In the next coalition agreement, firm commitments must be made, for otherwise we do not know where we stand with the VVD (KHA, 1986: 299).

After the prime minister had declared that the ministers of the CDA would sooner resign than sign a bill they did not support, the parliamentary leader of the VVD suggested that the matter be postponed. The consequence was that the bill could not be submitted before the elections and a coalition crisis was avoided (KHA, 1986: 296-299, 324-326).

Equal treatment Halfway through its term in office, the government had still not reached agreement over a bill on equal treatment. There were two main points of controversy between the parties. First, there was the question whether or not constitutional article 1 which prohibits discrimination in general weighed heavier than freedom of religion, assembly and education mentioned in subsequent constitutional articles. Second, disagreement existed over what should be and to what degree, specified in the new law, in particular with regard to the position of homosexual teachers at religious schools. This lack of results meant the VVD introduced a motion in the Second Chamber asking the government to come up with a bill and thus carry out the coalition agreement before June 1985. This motion was supported by the PvdA and D66, but not by the CDA.

In September 1985, prime minister Lubbers declared publicly that the government had failed to reach agreement on a bill and added that the matter would become a free issue in parliament. The parliamentary groups of the CDA and VVD interpreted this differently. A spokesman from the CDA group in the Second Chamber made the objection that an issue could only be free if this was stated explicitly in the coalition agreement. With the anti discrimination legislation this was not the case and therefore the parties should observe their coalitional commitments both within and outside the government. In contrast, the VVD group began to look openly towards the PvdA and started to prepare a bill. In December, the party presented what it called carefully a 'first draft of a possible parliamentary initiative'. This first draft extended to all sorts of discrimination. This was, however, an unlucky move, as the PvdA only gave priority to legislation on sex discrimination and the CDA was still playing for time and because of this no anti

discrimination law was submitted before the end of the government (Beleid Beschouwd, October 1985, January 1986). Thus, on this item of 'immaterial policy', the implementation of the coalition agreement also got stuck in the parliamentary arena.

There are two reasons for the length of the preceding section. One is that the scope of bargaining during the formation of the Lubbers I coalition was relatively broad. The other reason is that the Lubbers I coalition, unlike the other coalitions, lasted its full constitutional term and dealt with all the issues on which arrangements were made. The question that will be examined more systematically in the following section is whether the different arrangements were instrumental in preventing conflict and forming policy.

SUCCESSSES AND FAILURES OF THE LUBBERS I COALITION

The outcomes in terms of implementation or nonimplementation and the presence or absence of conflict are presented in table 8.2. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the patterns of outcomes in the light of the hypotheses on the three types of arrangements.

Table 8.2
Outcomes of arrangements in Lubbers I coalition agreement

Outcome	Type of arrangement			
	explicit	procedural	implicit-general	
elaborated/implemented (no conflict)	2 (fin,so-ec)	1 (scho)	1 (so-ec)	(4)
not elaborated/implemented (no conflict)	1 (fin)	-	-	(1)
elaborated/implemented (conflict)	3 (fin)	1 (nuc)	6 (so-ec,fin,nuc)	(10)
not elaborated/implemented (conflict)	2 (fin,med)	-	5 (med,eth,scho)	(7)
	(8)	(2)	(12)	(22)

key to symbols:

fin = financial and budgetary policy scho = school policy eth = ethical issues
so-ec = socio-economic policy nuc = nuclear policy med = media

The streamlining effect of explicit compromises

Did explicit compromises streamline policy making in the Lubbers I coalition? There were 8 explicit compromises, mostly on financial and budgetary policy, only two were implemented without giving rise to conflict. The general distribution of cuts between the major spending areas as outlined in the agreement was followed, be it that the allocation of extra cuts on which the government decided was different every year. The other arrangement implemented regarded the financial stimulation of employment, on which the parties had agreed to spend 750 million each year. Another possible outcome was that conflict did not re-emerge nor were policy decisions taken. This happened with the agreement to cut civil service personnel by 2 percent per year.

The most frequent outcome relatively was that in which compromises were implemented, but only after conflict had re-emerged (this happened in 3 out of 8 cases). Here, the compromises were about the size and distribution of cutbacks. Often, the minister of finance used the coalition agreement to legitimise these cutbacks. Even in the case of fairly specific compromises, however, these were not always immediately accepted by all the ministers involved. Decisions on cuts in the general sectors of social security, health and public sector wages conformed to the agreement, while part of the cuts in the normal departmental budgets were re-allocated, something the coalition agreement contained a provision for. In both cases, the decisions were preceded by conflict between the minister of finance and his colleagues from the spending departments. For this reason, Toirkens' conclusion that the Lubbers I coalition agreement reduced mistrust between ministers with regard to cutbacks in departmental budgets seems too optimistic (Toirkens, 1988: 143). It may be noted that the extra cuts that the minister of finance dragged out during the annual rounds of negotiations on the budget were mostly evaded. Indeed, only the cuts mentioned in the coalition agreement were actually carried out (ibid: 271). This was also the situation with the explicit compromise to decrease the budget deficit from some 11 percent to 7.5 percent of the national income. Though the deficit (and the commitment made during government formation) was a frequent source of dispute in the coalition, the deficit eventually appeared to have been reduced to almost the agreed percentage of 7.5, to 7.8 percent.

Failure was the outcome of two explicit compromises. The promise to 'freeze' the general percentage of rates and taxes was not kept, as taxes were more often increased than decreased, even if in accordance with the agreement trade and industry were given some financial relief. The only explicit compromise outside the areas of financial and socio-economic policy was made in the field of media policy and concerned cable access to foreign programmes. This compromise did not however prevent the recurrence of interparty conflict, leading to a total lack of legislation on the topic. This must be seen in connection with the outcomes of other, implicit, arrangements on broadcasting policy, which were to be turned into legislation but also gave rise to conflict (see below).

In short, the actual outcomes do not sustain the view that explicit compromises streamline policy making. If the frequency of implementation and conflict are considered it can be concluded that outcomes were more positive in terms of policy prefiguration (5 out of 8) than in terms of conflict prevention (3 out of 8).

The freezing effect of procedural arrangements

There were two important procedural arrangements. One of these contained a postponement of definitive decisions on school reform, this removed this controversial matter effectively from the agenda. The other arrangement however was a postponement of a decision on cruise missiles until a later stage in the government's life and though the postponement was observed, this did not prevent conflict occurring. As the main aim of the parties when making this type of arrangement was to depoliticise decision making, the conclusion must be that this function is not entirely indicated.

The boomerang effect of general implicit compromises

Typically, the different outcomes of general implicit compromises were linked to policy areas. General compromises on financial and socio-economic policy were mostly elaborated and implemented, but only the arrangement on the postbank was elaborated and implemented without conflict. Strong commitments were made on the size of cuts in government expenditure but the way to realise these cuts had still to be determined by the government and this was the main problem which dominated policy making in the field of socio-economic policy. When considering the period 1982-86 as a whole, the elaboration of the general intention to decrease social benefits and pursue wage restraint in the public sector took the form of many different smaller, or larger, retrenchment operations in different sectors. Though this involved much conflict, departmental as well as along party lines, substantive results were achieved. With regard to income policy, the efforts of the Lubbers coalition were successful, though this remained a sensitive area. Conflict over the levelling of middle and lower incomes occurred mainly during the government's first year in office. No such levelling took place, at least not on behalf of the government, which entailed a gain for the VVD, and this also seems to have been the situation with the issue of the coupling mechanism between wages and social benefits, which was not maintained, the VVD's preferred result. On these issues, the government pursued a policy of *laissez faire*, but it played a more active role when revising the fiscal regime for double income couples to produce a result which combined Liberal and Christian Democratic principles.

In the fields of what has been called 'immaterial' policy, the outcomes were mostly less substantive. The arrangement on the existing nuclear military tasks was elaborated, at

least in the sense that a substantive decision was taken, a reduction of nuclear tasks in combination with the deployment of cruise missiles, though actual deployment would not be realised during the term of the Lubbers I government. It must be noted, however, that due to dissidence within the CDA the decisions on the issue obtained a majority in parliament only with the help of the small religious parties. No real legislative coalitions of incumbent parties with opposition parties were formed in the areas of education, broadcasting and the ethical issues of euthanasia and equal treatment, as this would have threatened the life of the coalition and as a result, the elaboration of arrangements on these matters foundered in the parliamentary arena.

With respect to the Lubbers I coalition, there is broad empirical support for the hypothesis that general implicit compromises generate rather than prevent coalitional conflict. The paradoxical point is however that these arrangements were often elaborated and implemented, at least in the area of socio-economic policy. Indeed, success in this respect was almost as frequent as when explicit compromises had been made (7/12 against 5/8). The overall outcomes of the three types of arrangements are summarised in table 8.3.

Table 8.3
Success and failure of the Lubbers I coalition

		implementation	
		+	-
conflict	-	4	1
	+	10	7

The coalition agreement was an important element of coalition politics between 1982 and 1986. After the dissolution of parliament in 1986, the minister of finance commented that:

Next time we should make a coalition agreement that leads less to discussions about the details of arrangements. (...) Sometimes, the agreement was an obstacle for me; colleagues in such cases referred to the text, which had become sacrosanct (Van Tijn & Van Weezel, 1986: 276; author's translation).

The other, less acknowledged, side of the coin is that the agreement did not always streamline coalition decision making. In this case study of arrangements on controversial issues, failure was also an important outcome. The coalition was more successful in resolving policy conflict after taking office than in preventing it beforehand.

FACTORS EXPLAINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE

In terms of implementation, outcomes in the Lubbers I coalition were more mixed than for other coalitions. Thus, I must account for both success and failure perhaps even more so than for the other cases. What has become clear is that there was only a small difference between the rate of implementation of explicit and general implicit compromises. This suggests that the type of arrangement itself makes little difference in the process of enforcement (explicit compromises are not more 'self enforcing') and that other factors such as those relating to the coalition and its composite parts must be relevant. In this section I look at whether the factors identified and examined in the preceding chapters were relevant favourable or unfavourable conditions for the process of enforcement of arrangements. As the Lubbers I government completed its constitutional term in office, there were no arrangements which remained unimplemented due to conflict over other matters triggering the fall of the government. This means that in the present case I will consider the complete set of 22 arrangements made during government formation.

Table 8.4
Association between factors and outcomes in the Lubbers I coalition⁴

factor	policy field					
	finance/ budget	socio- economic	nuclear arms	media	school	ethical
coalition size	(+)	(+)	o	o	o	o
internal party unity	+	++	o	o	o	o
negotiators in government	++	++	o	--	o	--
prime ministerial support	++	+	++	-	o	-
coalition committees	o	o	o	o	o	o
personal relationships	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
economic situation	++	o	o	o	o	o

key to symbols:

- ++ or + direct association between factor and success
- or - direct association between factor and failure
- o no association found
- n.a. not assessed (no indication of presence or absence factor)

The different factors and whether or not these were associated with the outcomes are given in table 8.4. Again, it should be realised that the number of cases was small and

⁴ See the appendix for more detailed findings on the Lubbers I coalition.

that the numbers of arrangements varied between policy fields; on nuclear and 'immaterial' policy (media, school, ethical issues) there were only two or three arrangements. It must also be emphasised that the figures in the table tell us only whether or not there was, in a rough sense, a 'strong' or 'weak' association between a factor and outcomes in the way assumed. In what follows, I go somewhat further into the question of the impact of each of the factors.

Coalition size and reciprocal control

The Lubbers I government was a two party coalition. The assumption was that this would strengthen reciprocal control as an enforcement mechanism. The temptation for an individual party to give up cooperation unilaterally in the implementation of an arrangement containing relatively few payoffs was seen to depend on the extent of mutual control. In strictly numerical terms there appears to be a (weak) association between the two variables (14 out of 22 arrangements were implemented). It is important to realise however that success was confined to two, or when including the nuclear arms issue three, policy areas. Conflict without substantive results was the typical outcome in the fields of media policy, school policy and ethical issues, but no legislative (voting) coalitions were formed. Compared with the other cases, there were more possibilities for legislative coalitions, that is, *voting* coalitions, as the relatively small size of the government coalition implied that there were 'coalitionable' parties in the opposition (PvdA, D66). In the Netherlands, parties are seen to have a free vote on issues and to be 'allowed' to form legislative coalitions only if this is agreed explicitly during government formation. The absence of such legislative coalitions may also be seen in the light of mutual control, or indeed mutual blackmailing; allusions to such 'disloyal' manoeuvres made by one party were sometimes countered by the threat of a coalition crisis by the other. While not facilitating unequivocally the enforcement of arrangements in the sense that substantive policies were formulated and approved, reciprocal control seems to have been important in the Lubbers I coalition. One of the factors that was likely to have been relevant in this respect was the two party character of the coalition.

The internal unity of coalition parties

At least theoretically, even a two party government in which mutual control is strong may have serious difficulties with implementing intentions if internal divisions are manifest within the parties, or even within one party. Did this kind of internal heterogeneity become manifest within the CDA or VVD during government formation or during the life of the government? With the exception of nuclear weapons policy, the two parties seem to

have been fairly homogenous. In the fields of immaterial policy party values and principles were at stake but these were mostly a source of trouble between and not within the parties. Moreover, unlike during the formation of the Van Agt II government, there were no, or at least no strong, tensions over socio-economic issues within the CDA.

This factor thus was a favourable condition in all fields except nuclear policy. The absence of intraparty divisions may thus have contributed to success in the areas of finance and socio-economic policy. While the presence of such divisions may have contributed to failure to complete legislation on secondary education reform, though it is difficult to say what the influence of this factor was exactly. Despite the absence of intraparty divisions in the other fields no substantive successes were reached, whereas the presence of internal dispute within the CDA on the cruise missiles issue did not prevent a decision eventually being taken and approved. Intraparty unity or disunity may have played some part in the enforcement process but it does not seem to have been a necessary condition given the different outcomes in situations in which parties were internally homogenous.

Negotiators as ministers

The Lubbers I government contained negotiators in the fields of financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy as well as in the area of education. If ministers participated in negotiations on the coalition agreement this was seen as a factor that facilitated enforcement. In the socio-economic 'pentagon', containing the prime minister and the four key ministers in the field of financial and socio-economic policy, the minister of finance (CDA) was the only one who had not been involved in government formation, but there can be little doubt about this minister's faithfulness to the coalition agreement. In fact, he often demanded 'budgetary discipline' from his colleagues, especially those of the spending departments. The other ministers in the 'pentagon' also cooperated in the realisation of the ambitious retrenchment programme; the minister of Economic Affairs led work group A in which the arrangements on financial and socio-economic policy were made or at least prepared. Thus, at least with respect to these areas, the association of success with ministerial experience as a negotiator is likely to have been more than a coincidence.

The opposite situation existed in other fields, in which the coalition was less successful. Only the minister of education had been involved directly during government formation (he presided over the discussions in work group B), but this did not prevent legislation remaining uncompleted. The legislative process foundered at the stage of parliamentary discussions. We should, however, realise that failure was often the result of conflict between the parliamentary parties. If ministers are able to influence the implementation process, this influence decreases once matters are examined in parliament

and unlike in Belgium, Dutch ministers do not have a seat in parliament. Though the parliamentary groups contained members of work group B, their role in the critical stages seems to have been limited, as they for example, were not the first party spokespersons in the discussions. The presence of former negotiators in the government may have facilitated the implementation of one part of the coalition agreement, but it is more difficult to see how their absence in other fields of policy can be linked to failure.

Prime ministerial support

Did the prime minister play a positive role in the enforcement of the coalition agreement? At the end of the term of his first government, Ruud Lubbers had certainly gained a reputation as an activist, in contrast to his predecessor Van Agt. During government formation, Lubbers had been his party's first spokesman before he became a *formateur*. Examples of prime ministerial influence on the elaboration and implementation of arrangements cover cases of success and failure. We must realise however that 'failure' often was anything but unintended. Lubbers used different methods to reduce centrifugal forces within the government. Ministers were taken aside frequently and reminded of their commitments. The outstanding example of prime ministerial involvement in the elaboration of the coalition agreement was Lubbers' role in the decision making on nuclear arms, an issue which he depoliticised by cutting it into pieces that were then dealt with one by one. Lubbers had already tried to limit the role of parliament on this matter during government formation.

In the important fields of financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy, Lubbers sometimes made proposals which went against the coalition agreement. This corresponds with the finding of one author that the prime minister did not always back the minister of finance, who was committed strongly to the compromises on financial and budgetary policy (Toirkens, 1988: 182-182). Though not all Lubbers' proposals were followed, the changes from one financial priority to another and vice versa made by the government may at least be attributed in part to the prime minister's manoeuvres. The role of the prime minister with respect to immaterial issues is less clear. Thus, if not for all relevant policy areas, prime ministerial support seems to have been a relevant factor, mostly in relation to success but also to failure.

Coalition committees

As in the Van Agt II government, there was a socio-economic 'pentagon' in the Lubbers I government, with the difference that it did not form the political top of the coalition. Another *cabinet* committee, also not a coalition committee in that it contained no

spokespersons from other sections of the parties, was formed especially to elaborate nuclear weapons policy. This committee was formed because there were no ministers from the VVD in this field, while it was politically unthinkable that decisions on this issue were taken exclusively by the CDA (Andeweg, 1985: 147). Though not coalition committees in actual sense, these informal cabinet committees played a crucial role during the process of elaborating arrangements and in the success of the outcome.

An actual coalition committee met weekly over the lunch table, this committee contained ministers and the parliamentary leaders. The 'political luncheons' held by this informal group have been found to be important (Andeweg, 1990: 32). To be more precise about the relevance of these meetings requires much more detailed information of developments within the coalition and this is beyond the scope of this study. This coalition committee was unable to accomplish legislation on broadcasting, on secondary education reform, on euthanasia and on equal treatment before the elections. This underlines that it cannot be taken for granted that coalition committees have real 'steering potential' with regard to the elaboration and implementation of coalition agreements.

The economic situation

Economic problems were generally acknowledged by the parties when conducting the coalition negotiations. The coalition agreement contained the most ambitious retrenchment programme of the postwar period. With respect to budgetary policy, the economic circumstances seem to have motivated ministers to observe arrangements, especially on cutbacks. compromises over extra cuts were reached. Changes in the emphasis on financial and economic goals in successive years, sometimes in contradiction to the coalition agreement also seem to have been based at least partly on the parties' interpretation of economic figures. Thus, both success and failure, in the sense that policies were pursued at variance with the coalition agreement, seem to have been at least partly, the consequence of the reactions of the parties to economic developments.

Personal relationships

Finally, the personal factor, which was so important in the preceding government, seems to have played a background role. This is not to say that personal relationships were irrelevant but rather that no personal conflicts between ministers or other prominents were recorded that were so important that they may have contributed to failure. Another indication that such problems did not occur is that that after the elections in 1986 the second Lubbers government contained mostly the same ministers. This had not happened since the 'good old days' of the Drees governments in the 1950s.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to the Van Agt II coalition, the Lubbers I coalition was the first preference of the participant parties. At the same time, there were manifest and important differences between policy preferences in several distinct fields, on which extensive bargaining took place during government formation. The results of these policy negotiations were explicit and especially implicit compromises (8 were explicit and 14 were implicit, of which 2 were procedural arrangements). Explicit compromises were made almost exclusively in the areas of financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy. The typical result of bargaining on what were called 'immaterial' issues was an implicit compromise. An important substantive motivation for the forming of the CDA-VVD coalition was the pursuit of retrenchment policy, however, 'immaterial' issues such as commercial broadcasting, secondary education reform, euthanasia and equal treatment often involved strong party values and principles which were difficult to match. The parties appeared more successful in matching principles on issues which also involved a clear 'material' aspect, such as the problem of income tax for couples with two incomes.

As conflict was frequent not only when general implicit compromises were to be elaborated, which was to be expected but also when explicit compromises were on the governmental agenda (which was contrary to the hypothesis on this type of arrangements), the Lubbers I coalition agreement did not function well to prevent conflict (conflict occurred in 17 of the 22 cases). This contrasts with outcomes in the preceding Van Agt II coalition, when conflict was relatively less frequent but had a much more destabilising effect.

The coalition agreement, or at least the relevant parts in it, constituted the agenda of the government. Though there were issues which had not been dealt with extensively during government formation, it is no exaggeration to say that what was discussed in the relatively short time of two months were the most important points for government action. More rarely, the result was a narrowed scope of action in the government's four year period. Nearly two thirds (14 out of 22) of the arrangements were elaborated and implemented. This however did not always mean that the agreement was functional in terms of policy prefiguration, as certain matters were actually only *placed* on the agenda, to be taken up by the government. In the field of financial and budgetary policy, the agreement was not only an agenda but the arrangements also 'predetermined' policy to a considerable extent. For this reason, it has been called the 'paper ally' of the minister of finance (Andeweg, 1989: 16-17). In other areas, policy prefiguration was more indicative. The more general arrangements on broadcasting, school and ethical issues also had less concrete results. This underlines that long term governments are not automatically more successful in policy making, at least not in all relevant areas.

A somewhat more indirect effect of the coalition agreement has been that despite conflict between the parliamentary groups of the CDA and VVD, these refrained from forming legislative coalitions unilaterally with opposition parties on immaterial policy. This may be seen in the light of mutual control, which seems to have been strengthened by the relatively small size of the coalition, which, paradoxically, meant that there were more possibilities for legislative coalitions, simply because there were more 'coalitionable' opposition parties. Due to the two party character of the coalition, this reciprocal control is also likely to have contributed to the implementing of arrangements in the important fields of financial and socio-economic policy, from which both the CDA and the VVD obtained substantive payoffs.

Apart from coalition size and its supposed effect on the mechanism of reciprocal control, other factors also seem to have contributed to successes or failures in different fields. The presence of former negotiators in the government is likely to have facilitated the implementation of one part of the coalition agreement, but it is less easy to see what may have been the role of this factor in the areas in which the outcome was failure. In these areas there were few or no negotiators, but failure occurred mostly in the parliamentary arena. In fact, the presence of negotiators in the parliamentary groups did not prevent failure. There are also no clear indications that the informal coalition committee of ministers and the two parliamentary leaders or personal relationships influenced the implementation process in a particular way. Further, the absence of major and manifest internal divisions within parties may have facilitated implementation in the areas of financial and socio-economic policy but in other areas in which no such centrifugal forces were present the outcome was failure.

A more generally relevant factor seems to have been prime ministerial support. Lubbers played both a procedural and substantial role in the process of elaborating and implementing arrangements, which not only contributed to success but also to failure in the sense that policy decisions were not always in accordance with the letter or the spirit of the coalition arrangement. Finally, if the assumption on the economic context was that changing economic circumstances demotivate (individual) parties from holding on to commitments made beforehand, this was not always true in the Lubbers I coalition. Economic developments were used as an argument for changes in policy priorities which were against the letter and the spirit of the coalition agreement but they were also used to legitimise the implementation of arrangements on retrenchment policy.

9

High Politics in the Low Countries: Do Coalition Policy Agreements Matter?

INTRODUCTION

In this study I have dealt with coalition policy agreements and their effects during the life of governments. The leading question was whether coalition agreements function to prevent conflict and promote policy making within coalition governments. This dual question was seen to be of special relevance to Belgium and the Netherlands, two countries where, since the mid 1960s, comprehensive and detailed joint policy agreements have been formulated before a new coalition government has been sworn in.

Party manifestos form a link between parties and their respective electorates, while written coalition agreements may be seen to establish a relationship between parties taking office together. Though parties may not really discuss all matters that are normally within the scope of government action and certainly not make everything the subject of bargaining, negotiations on a coalition agreement in the low countries seem to be more than just window dressing. Thus, apart from a symbolic function which may follow, for example, from the general pressure from within society to mention what the government intends to do in area x and to pay attention to subject y, coalition agreements may also have more substantive functions. These possible functions are, first, to provide a coalition agenda and second, to prevent the recurrence of conflict on particular issues during the life of the government. Both functions are based on the view that government formation is a policy making arena characterised by 'invisible politics' and fewer institutionally or constitutionally required procedures (Peterson & De Ridder, 1986).

As said, party leaders are unlikely to negotiate on everything. At least in part this is so because they do not all emphasise the same issues and find it unnecessary, given time constraints which are usually strong during government formation, to discuss matters on which general consensus exists or which are not really salient to any of the parties. What interests us here is the set of issues which are salient to two or more parties and also controversial among them. These issues may change from election to election, though some may be more permanently salient, as for example issues in the fields of financial and socio-economic policy, which in the 1970s and 1980s drove parties to insist more

strongly on their principles when confronted with financial and budgetary problems.

Controversial issues have thus formed the point of departure in the four case studies. The first step in each of these case studies was to go from controversial issues to written arrangements. These arrangements might take the form of explicit compromises or be general or procedural in character. In the specific context of the Netherlands and Belgium, parties were expected to come into contention over issues in several distinct policy fields, relating to different ideological cleavages, though this was not always a one to one relationship; some different fields could relate to one cleavage, as with school policy and morality issues for example, which divided religious and secular parties. This multiplicity of policy themes is what, in more abstract terms, constitutes a 'multidimensional policy space'. The second step moves from arrangements to outcomes, which may be peace and policy, one or other of them, or neither of them. Different rates of 'success' were expected as outcomes of explicit compromises, procedural arrangements, and more general arrangements.

I deal with the findings from the four case studies in this chapter, following the same analytical steps as made in the case studies. I will first look to see if particular patterns in the types of arrangements emerge, as well as in the outcomes of these arrangements across the cases. Next, I consider the question whether characteristics of coalitions and their composite elements may account for successes and failures. To be able to make some generalisations, it is necessary to take some distance from the specific context of each of the cases. At the same time, it is necessary to try to avoid making statements which are unjust with regard to any of the findings in the case studies.

POLICY CONFLICTS AND ARRANGEMENTS

Fixed and fixing agendas in government formation

The issues debated during government formation were in part conflicts 'inherited' from the previous coalition and for another part issues were raised by the parties on the basis of their election manifestos. Only the formation of the Leburton government was not preceded by elections. In the Leburton and the Lubbers I coalition, the category of inherited problems contained the issue(s) that had triggered the fall of the previous coalition. This has been the rule rather than the exception since 1965 in Belgium, where internal conflicts are relatively more frequent than in the Netherlands. Developments within the Van Agt II coalition and subsequently in the formation of the Lubbers I coalition also sustain the view that policy bargaining on politically important and controversial issues is an ongoing process which may extend to successive governments

and may shift between formal and informal arenas.

Areas of policy conflict in government formation

Though at least in theory matters which divide parties could be ignored, particular fields of policy were felt to be so important during government formation that this was hardly possible. Issues often concerned matters which had a high ideological content; central principles and the identities of parties were at stake. Moreover, in the period 1970-1990, the different approaches of the Christian Democrats, Liberals and Social Democrats to the chronic economic problems also meant that financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy became a major source of interparty conflict, even though issues in these areas are usually more quantifiable and for this reason more compromisable than other subjects. In the two Belgian cases and in the case of the Lubbers I coalition, the pursuit of policy on such politically sensitive matters formed the *raison d'être* of the government. The Leburton and the Tindemans V coalitions were both extended to control at least a two thirds majority to 'secure' the constitutionally required two thirds majority for making institutional reforms. Thus, general policy ambitions in certain areas were an important reason why conflicting preferences on specific issues were prominent in government formation.

Apart from these important fields, other matters on the agenda often related to the 'old' religious cleavage, the division between religious and secular parties which has been more or less manifest since the formation of these parties. Matters where the religious secular divide was relevant were school policy, ethical questions and media policy. Issues in the fields of school and media policy especially must be seen in the context of the pluralist systems, which in both countries are an expression of 'peacemaking' (*pacificatie*) between the different tendencies. The Christian Democrats have displayed great suspicion with regard to proposals affecting the traditional institutional arrangements in these areas.

Finally, a policy 'dimension' that stood somewhat apart was nuclear policy. Issues relating to this 'dimension' (here we actually should speak of a theme) may cover both energy policy and foreign/defence policy, which have usually not been considered to be very important during government formation in Belgium and the Netherlands since the 1960s (or at least these areas are less important than the aforementioned areas¹). In the early 1980s, nuclear policy, especially in the military sphere, ceased to be an area of general consensus among the main parties. In the two Dutch cases issues in this area divided the coalition parties and caused internal divisions within the CDA.

The relevant policy areas in the cases are summarised in table 9.1 (the typically 'Belgian' issues are given from top to bottom, and the issues which were salient

¹ This can be concluded from expert survey research conducted by Laver & Hunt (1992) as well as from the content analysis of policy programmes undertaken by the Manifesto Research Group (Laver & Budge, 1992).

exclusively or mainly in the Netherlands from bottom to top). In the final column, the coalitions are given in order of decreasing importance of the respective policy area, i.e. regionalisation was relatively most important in the Tindemans V coalition. An indicator of this importance, if not a perfect one, is the relative number of arrangements concerning issues in the relevant area. Some variation between the cases with respect to the scope of bargaining can be seen in table 9.1. During the formation of the Tindemans V coalition, bargaining was limited to four policy fields, whereas the formulation of the Lubbers I coalition agreement involved negotiations in six different areas. Paradoxically, the first coalition contained five parties, the second only two.

The overall picture of relevant policy areas corresponds with the main subjects of governmental conflicts in Belgium in the Netherlands that have been recorded for the 1970s and 1980s in a recent study of internal processes within European cabinets (Nousiainen, 1993). In Belgium, cabinet conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s were mostly over what are called 'cultural problems', a broader category which includes language policy, regionalisation and school policy, on financial and economic policy and on issues relating to justice and general administrative matters (for which no clear equivalents can be found in the case-studies, perhaps because these matters were more departmental than party political conflicts). The conflicts recorded for Dutch cabinets concern mainly finance and economic policy, social affairs, and foreign affairs/defence and justice (ibid: 270).

Table 9.1
Types of arrangements in relevant policy fields
(absolute figures)

policy field	type of arrangement				where important?
	explicit	procedural	general	all	
language policy	2			2	Leb
regionalisation policy	18	3	1	22	Tin(ex),Leb(ex)
school policy	3	2	5	10	Leb(ex),Lub,vA
ethical questions	1		3	4	Lub,Leb
socio-economic policy	5		11	16	vA(ex),Lub,Tin,Leb
finance/budget	9		5	14	Lub(ex),vA,Tin
media policy	1		2	3	Lub
nuclear policy		4	1	5	vA,Lub
	(39)	(9)	(28)	(76)	

key to symbols:

Leb = Leburton Tin = Tindemans V vA = Van Agt II Lub = Lubbers I
(ex) = explicit compromises were relatively most frequent in the coalition agreement

Table 9.2
Types of arrangements in coalition agreements
(absolute figures)

coalition	type of arrangement			
	explicit	procedural	general	
Leburton	14	4	6	(24)
Tindemans V	12	-	3	(15)
Van Agt II	5	3	7	(15)
Lubbers I	8	2	12	(22)
	(39)	(9)	(28)	(76)

Explicit and implicit compromises as results of policy bargaining

What type of arrangements ensued in which field is also shown in table 9.1. The relative frequencies of these types of arrangements in the four cases are given in table 9.2. Explicit compromises contained commitments to intentions which differed from the prenegotiation preferences of one or more parties and thus involved substantive concessions. Implicit compromises either took the form of procedural arrangements which were meant to freeze, at least for a time, decision making, or were 'compromises' that were sufficiently general that no clear gains and losses were made by any party (though in part this depends on the degree to which parties actually wanted clear cut and 'doable' intentions).

The proportion of explicit compromises appears to vary between the coalitions, but more between the two countries. While explicit compromises were relatively frequent in Belgium, parties in the Netherlands were more inclined to agree implicitly on issues and they did so mostly in a general, non-procedural, way. These differences must be seen in connection with the fields of policy in which the arrangements ensued. From table 9.1, it can be seen that in Belgium many explicit compromises were formulated on regionalisation policy. Parties in the Netherlands reached both explicit and implicit compromises on financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy, though in this last field implicit compromises were more frequent. The two areas were also the most important areas of interparty bargaining.

With regard to other fields of policy, mostly implicit compromises were reached in both countries. Issues in these fields were often seen as matters of principle, on which it was difficult to formulate substantive joint intentions. In Belgium, bargaining on financial and socio-economic policy also resulted mostly in implicit compromises. This may be because socio-economic issues especially in Belgium were ideologically divisive, but another reason also noted in the case studies may be that the heavy emphasis on

community and regionalisation policy during government formation meant that less time was spent on other matters, given the general time pressure.

Given that implicit compromises were frequent, it is no surprise that when speaking of the contents of government policy declarations, Laver & Budge (1992; 428) conclude that in countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands 'no immediate obvious relationship between the policies of parties and the policies of governments exists'. Part of the 'policies of governments' still need to be specified when these governments take office.

OUTCOMES OF ARRANGEMENTS

The possible outcomes of arrangements were seen to contain a conflict element, the presence or absence of conflict and an implementation element (the term 'implementation' is preferred to 'policy', as it covers more than substantive decisions, which sometimes were not intended). To examine the substantive functions of coalition agreements empirically, three hypotheses were formulated. Explicit compromises were expected to be implemented without giving rise to new conflict between the coalition parties. They were thus seen to be functional in preventing conflict and promoting policy making within the coalition. The hypothesis on implicit compromises of the general type was that these do not prevent the recurrence of conflict on the relevant issues and result in substantive decisions less often than when explicit compromises are formulated and certainly less often in a peaceful manner. Procedural arrangements were expected to contribute to the peace within coalitions, or in any case not to lead to new conflict, which was also seen to be the main intention behind this type of arrangement.

When speaking of outcomes of arrangements, I mean outcomes of attempts to implement or perhaps to prevent the implementation of arrangements made during government formation. Moreover, by success and failure, I mean the extent to which conflicts on policy remained absent and intentions were carried out. What is called a 'success' may not be perceived as a failure at all by one or more of the coalition parties, and the same applies to what is called a 'failure'.

The outcomes of the three types of arrangements in the four coalitions are given in tables 9.3 to 9.5. In addition, the overall outcomes in different fields of policy are presented in table 9.6. It must be emphasised that as in the case studies, I am dealing with outcomes in terms of frequencies. More qualitative differences between individual arrangements will be considered when such differences are relevant to our understanding of what has been going on within the coalitions. Qualitative aspects are the length and the intensity of

conflicts, which may be at least as important to coalition survival as the frequency of conflict; they may also include differences in the weight of substantive policies for one or more parties.

Table 9.3
Outcomes of explicit compromises
(‘success’ percentages)

	conflict absent		implementation		implementation without conflict		
Leburton	43	(42)	50	(58)	29	(33)	n = 14 (12)
Tindemans V	50	(33)	8	(17)	8	(17)	n = 12 (6)
Van Agt II	60	(50)	20	(25)	20	(25)	n = 5 (4)
Lubbers I	38		63		25		n = 8
total	46	(40)	36	(47)	21	(27)	n = 39 (30)

Figures between parentheses exclude arrangements which could not be implemented due to the fall of the government caused by conflict on other issues.

Table 9.4
Outcomes of implicit procedural arrangements
(‘success’ percentages)

	conflict absent		implementation		implementation without conflict		
Leburton	50		75		50		n = 4
Tindemans V	--		--		--		--
Van Agt II	100		67	(100)	67	(100)	n = 3 (2)
Lubbers I	50		100		50		n = 2
total	67		78	(88)	56	(63)	n = 9 (8)

Figures between parentheses exclude arrangements which could not be implemented due to the fall of the government caused by conflict on other issues.

Table 9.5
Outcomes of general implicit compromises
 ('success' percentages)

	conflict absent		implementation		implementation without conflict	
Leburton	0		33	(67)	0	n = 6 (3)
Tindemans V	0		100		0	n = 3
Van Agt II	29	(0)	0		0	n = 7 (4)
Lubbers I	8		58		8	n = 12
total	11	(5)	43	(55)	5	n = 28 (22)

Figures between parentheses exclude arrangements which could not be implemented due to the fall of the government caused by conflict on other issues.

Table 9.6
Outcomes of arrangements in different policy fields
 (absolute figures)

Policy field	Outcomes														
	explicit			general			procedural			all			where which outcome?		
	C	I	O	C	I	O	C	I	O	C	I	O	C	I	O
language policy		2							2						Leb
regionalisation policy	11	7		1			1	2		13	7		Tin,Leb	Leb	Tin
school policy	3	3		3	2	1	1	2		7	8	1	Leb,Lub	Leb	
ethical questions		1		3					3	1			Lub,Leb	Leb	
socio-economic policy	1	4	1	7	7	1			8	11	2		all	Tin,Lub	vA
finances/budget	5	4	2	5	3	1			10	7	3		vA,Lub,Tin	Lub,Tin	
media policy		1		2					3				Lub		
nuclear policy					1	2	4		2	4	1		Lub	Lub,vA	

key to symbols:

C = conflict I = implemented O = no conflict and not implemented Tin = Tindemans V, etc.

Figures in bold indicate that a coalition broke down over an issue in the relevant field. The scores add up to more than the total number of arrangements (76). This is because outcomes of individual arrangements were often both conflict and implementation.

The streamlining effect of explicit compromises

With respect to explicit compromises, it can be clearly seen from table 9.3 that there is only limited empirical evidence for the hypothesis that arrangements of this type streamline policy making. The proportion of compromises that was implemented without conflict varied between 8 and 29 percent (with an average of 21 percent). In the Netherlands, conflict occurred in the field of financial and budgetary policy, while in Belgium explicit compromises on regionalisation and institutional reform were the main sources of interparty dispute. As we know, these two areas were the most generally important areas in the two countries (see also table 9.6). Paradoxically, conflict remained absent in more than half the number of cases only in the short lived Van Agt II coalition, whereas within the Lubbers I coalition which lasted four years, nearly two thirds of the explicit compromises gave rise to conflict. Long duration of the coalition does not imply a low frequency of conflict. Moreover, if few *different* conflicts occur, this in no sense means that the life of the coalition was peaceful.

In the Lubbers I coalition, only explicit compromises contained 'predetermined' policies which were mostly implemented by the parties (this can be seen in table 9.6). In the Lubbers I coalition, the implementation of explicit compromises mostly involved conflict (this can be concluded when comparing the percentage for implementation with that for implementation without conflict). The policy decisions taken by this coalition were however confined largely to the sphere of financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy. The Leburton coalition also implemented 50 percent of the explicit compromises, despite, as in the Lubbers I coalition, the frequent occurrence of conflict. Indeed, despite its short term in office, the Leburton coalition produced important achievements, such as legislation on secular and religious schools and on language policy, including the issue of Fourons which had brought about the fall of the previous government.

In contrast, even though conflict was less frequent, explicit compromises were often left unimplemented by the Tindemans V and Van Agt II coalition. This 'failure' took two forms. Either decisions were taken which deviated from the agreement, or no substantive decisions were taken or approved. This failure included the premature end of both governments. In the case of the Tindemans V government, conflict on the implementation of explicit compromises was the main cause of collapse. The fall of the Van Agt II government was partly due to such conflict.

Given that there is limited evidence for the hypothesis that explicit compromises are implemented without conflict, it remains true that there was no interparty conflict in 46 percent, or 40 percent when correcting for cases which could not be implemented due to the end of the government after conflict over other issues. With respect to the implementation of explicit compromises, it would also be too pessimistic to speak only of failure. In two coalitions, explicit compromises predefined coalition policy in at least 50 percent of the cases. This is actually not a bad performance if we realise that the

compromises were made months or even years before the relevant issues were dealt with by the cabinet and in parliament.

The freezing effect of procedural arrangements

The case studies provide more evidence for the hypothesis that procedural arrangements function to maintain peace within coalitions, though here also the findings do not support the hypothesis unambiguously. In table 9.4 it can be seen that procedural arrangements were observed or carried out more often than they really prevented the recurrence of conflict and when this outcome occurred, the arrangements were thus not really effective. This was especially the case in the area of nuclear policy (Netherlands), in which agreed postponements of substantive decisions were observed but at the same time the issues continued to divide the parties. Another agreed procedure which was carried out but nonetheless did not prevent the emergence of conflict, indeed quite to the contrary, was the referral of the problem of the Brussels boundaries to a special parliamentary committee during the term of the Leburton government. Still, the overall proportion of procedural arrangements that was implemented without involving conflict was much higher (always 50 percent or more) than that for explicit compromises.

We must however realise that the percentages conceal the fact that the absolute numbers of arrangements were actually quite small. Moreover, the mostly positive outcomes of procedural arrangements (absence of conflict) in the case of the Leburton coalition and the Van Agt II coalition must be seen in connection to the short life of these coalitions. If conflicts on the relevant issues were latent, there was simply no time for these conflicts to become manifest. Another point to be emphasised once more is that the absence of conflict can be seen as a 'success' in terms of conflict prevention, but in the perception of one or more parties this may have been at the cost of substantive decisions (policy changes) which would have been preferred.

The boomerang effect of general arrangements

The case studies provide ample evidence for the hypothesis that general implicit compromises generate rather than obviate conflict. As can be seen in table 9.5, the average conflict percentage was high and for the two coalitions in Belgium conflict even occurred for all cases. As said before, frequency of conflict does not tell the whole story and this point is particularly relevant with respect to the case of the Van Agt II government, in which policy making was paralysed by extremely protracted conflict on a limited number of issues in the fields of financial and socio-economic policy (see table 9.6).

In conformation with what was expected, general compromises were elaborated and implemented less often than explicit compromises, except in the Tindemans V coalition. A more specific outcome which is also in line with our expectations is the small proportion (5 percent) of general arrangements which was implemented without conflict. As can be seen from table 9.6, the general arrangements which were elaborated and subsequently translated into substantive and formally approved decisions concerned mainly socio-economic policy, financial/budgetary policy and school policy. Failure was the dominant outcome of (parliamentary) discussions on media policy and ethical questions.

When comparing the three types of arrangements, we find a pattern which is consistent across the four cases with respect to the conflict element but not if we consider the implementation element. In conformation with what was hypothesised, conflictual outcomes of procedural arrangements were much less frequent (33 percent of the cases on average) than when general implicit compromises had been made (89 percent on average) and also less frequently than when the arrangement was an explicit compromise (54 percent). Though considerable variation existed within coalitions and also the consequences of conflict varied, this pattern emerges in all the coalitions in which these three types of arrangements were incorporated into the coalition agreement.

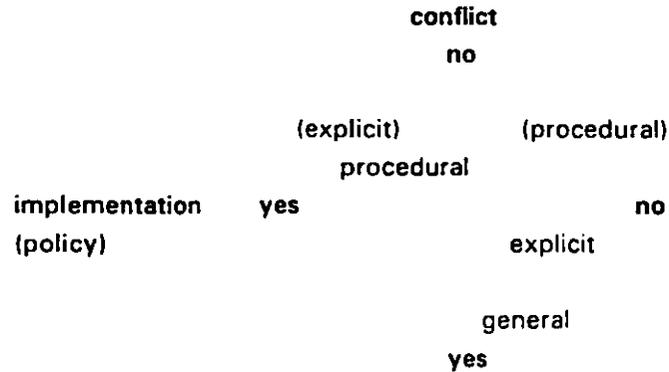
In terms of implementation, outcomes follow a pattern that is less consistent across the cases. While procedural arrangements were implemented most often (78 percent on average), explicit compromises came next in three cases but not in the case of the Tindemans V coalition, in which indeed all *general* arrangements were elaborated and implemented, while *explicit* compromises were barely implemented. It should be realised that nonimplementation of arrangements does not always imply that substantive policy decisions were absent; it can also mean that actual policies were at variance with the coalition agreement, though this did not happen often.

When considering the category containing peacefully implemented arrangements, the pattern found for outcomes in terms of conflict again emerges. The outcomes of procedural arrangements were more 'positive' than the outcomes of explicit compromises, and these in turn were appreciably more 'positive' than the outcomes of general arrangements, which barely had positive outcomes in this respect.

In figure 9.1 a picture is given of the empirical outcomes of the three types of arrangements. Note the differences with the hypothesised outcomes, which are given in parentheses. With respect to procedural arrangements, it should be noted that the hypothesised outcomes were negative in terms of implementation on the understanding that implementation means that *substantive* policy decisions are taken; otherwise, the difference between hypothesised and actual outcomes of this type of arrangements is limited. Outcomes of general implicit compromises were as conflictual as expected and

also the implementation rate of just below 50 percent was in line with the expectations. Only in *relative* terms, compared to explicit compromises, outcomes were more substantive than expected.

Figure 9.1
Outcomes of explicit and implicit compromises



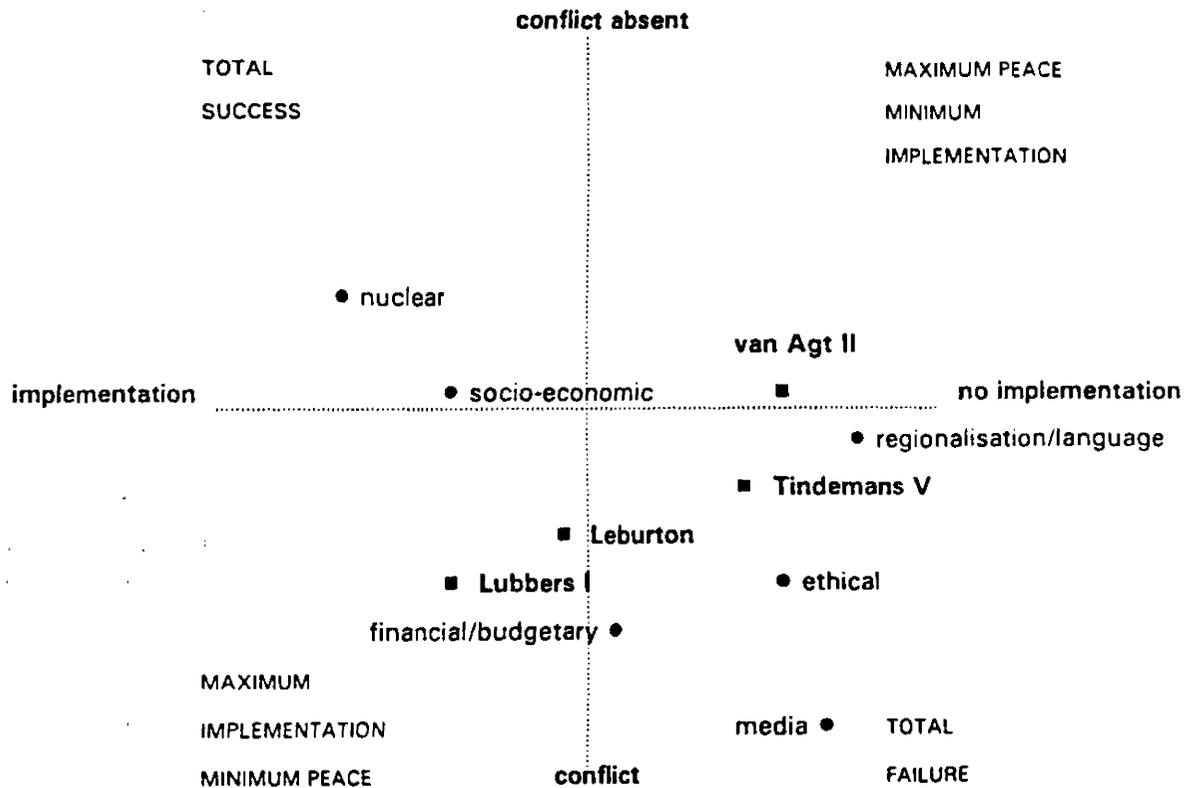
The general performance of coalitions

The overall performance of the four coalitions is depicted in figure 9.2. The figure illustrates the paradoxical finding that conflict and implementation often went together, at least when considering the *frequency* of success and failure and when considering all arrangements. Conflict in the Lubbers I coalition was frequent, but this did not prevent nearly 66 percent of the arrangements, mostly implicit compromises, being implemented. Of the arrangements that were implemented, 75 percent concerned substantive policies, the rest procedural arrangements.

With respect to the survival of coalitions, not only the frequency but also the protractedness and intensity of certain conflicts was important. The coalition with the lowest conflict percentage (Van Agt II) held office for the shortest period (note however that when corrections are made for arrangements of which the outcomes involved some ambiguity, the conflict percentage increases).

Figure 9.2

**Success and failure: coalitions and relevant policy fields
(all arrangements)**



<i>Coalition performance in percentages</i>	conflict	implementation
Leburton	67 (63)	50 (63)
Tindemans V	60 (78)	27 (44)
Van Agt II	47 (80)	20 (30)
Lubbers I	77	63
<i>average</i>	62 (68)	43 (55)

Percentages in parentheses exclude arrangements which could not be implemented due to the fall of the government after conflict over other issues.

Success and failure in different policy fields

The general outcomes in the relevant fields in terms of conflict and implementation can also be seen in figure 9.2 (table 9.6 contains the information used as a basis for these graphical representations). In this figure, the positions of the coalitions form the weighed averages. It must be emphasised that no differentiation is made between 'big' substantive

successes and failures and outcomes which were considered less important, nor between conflicts which hindered the decisions that were taken and those that triggered the fall of the coalition.

With the exception of the two arrangements on language policy and a number of arrangements on school policy, arrangements outside the direct sphere of financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy remained highly divisive and were mostly not implemented, except when they were procedural. Unimplemented arrangements concerned issues in which the principles and identities of parties were concerned directly. The apparent greater difficulty in resolving conflicts and taking substantive decisions on these matters is in line with the findings of a recent study by Klingemann, Hofferbert & Budge (1994: 264-266).

The loci of failure

By definition, substantive successes could only emerge from the formal decision making bodies, as a criterion for implementation was that policy decisions were formally approved within the government or by parliament (only with respect to procedural arrangements did this condition not apply). This was so, even if the process of implementation often shifted from one arena to the other and even if the government or the coalitional majority in parliament sometimes only ratified decisions that had been taken elsewhere.

Things are different with respect to failure, which could also occur in an informal arena. Failure indeed not always occurred within the government itself but was often the result of discussions between or within the parliamentary or extraparliamentary parties. In the Netherlands, second thoughts within other sections of the coalition parties mostly emerged when the arrangements were general implicit compromises, which in the Dutch context meant that the *parliamentary* parties had not reached substantive agreement on the relevant issues. On media policy, school policy and ethical problems, parliament was the arena in which the failure occurred. In Belgium, the process of implementation of arrangements foundered partly in parliament and for another part conflicts occurred in the informal arena where the party presidents held the cards. The arenas in which the implementation of arrangements failed definitively are given in table 9.7. Those arrangements which could not be implemented because the government broke down after conflict on other issues are excluded. If fields are placed not under one but between two columns in the table, failure occurred in both arenas or in an informal arena composed of spokespersons from different party sections.

Table 9.7
Locus of failure in relevant policy fields

	government	parliament	extraparliamentary parties
Leburton	socio-economic		
	regionalisation		
Tindemans V			regionalisation
Van Agt II	financial/budgetary		
	socio-economic		
Lubbers I	(financial/budgetary)		
	ethical		
	media		
	(school)		

Parentheses indicate that failure was not the dominant outcome in the field.

FAVOURABLE AND UNFAVOURABLE CONDITIONS FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF COALITION AGREEMENTS

Policy arrangements in coalition agreements are not enforceable by law, nor are they seen to be 'self policing'. Further, an important assumption in the case studies was that individual arrangements seldom contain equal payoffs for all coalition parties. Parties were seen to feel the temptation continually to depart from the coalition agreement, especially with regard to those arrangements on which they had made important concessions. Incentives for disloyal behaviour might concern policy, especially if concessions had been large and substantive, but electoral prospects or other kinds of chances or threats to individual parties might also play a part.

The general forces that might prevent parties from breaking compromises or acting against the spirit of the coalition agreement were seen to be the moral principle that agreements must be honoured and the mechanism of reciprocal control. The extent to which these forces really work effectively was seen to depend on a number of factors which are attributes of coalitions and their composite parts. The broader economic context was also mentioned as a potentially relevant factor. More specifically, the factors concerned (1) coalition size, in terms of the number of coalition parties, (2) the degree of internal unity of these parties, (3) the presence of negotiators in the government, (4) the attitude of the prime minister towards the relevant arrangements in the coalition agreement, (5) the existence of informal coalition committees, (6) the quality of personal relationships and (7) the general economic situation in the country.

In this section, I deal with the impact of these different factors on the process of implementing arrangements during the term of four coalition governments. To limit the complexity of this exercise, I consider the arrangements in a general way, without distinguishing between types of arrangements. The small difference between the rate of implementation of explicit and implicit compromises, unlike the contrast between outcomes in terms of conflict, suggests that the type of arrangement made no real difference to the question of enforcement.

The factors distinguished have been dealt with at the nominal level. They have also been considered for each of the relevant policy fields, with the exception of coalition size, which was constant within each of the cases and personal relationships, with respect to which only manifest and recorded clashes were taken into account. Economic developments or events have been considered only for outcomes of arrangements on financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy.

Though obviously the early breakdown of coalitions cannot be seen in isolation from developments within these coalitions, the premature end of governments is a problem if we want to find out what have been the relevant conditions for success and failure with respect to issues which did *not* lead to coalition breakdown, at least not directly. As for the case studies, I have therefore excluded those arrangements which could not be implemented due to 'fatal' conflict over other issues. This leaves us with 60 arrangements for consideration.

Whether or not each of the factors was associated with the implementation of arrangements is shown in table 9.8. As in the preceding chapters, the symbols in the table represent general associations, or the absence of these, between factors and outcomes, so between favourable conditions and success, and between unfavourable conditions and failure. It must be emphasised that the table is meant to present, in an informal way, the extent to which factors and outcomes were found to be associated and the exercise certainly is not meant to be a formal test. The strength of the associations has been calculated only for the factors on with the findings from the case studies allowed quantification for all arrangements.² The emerging values must however be interpreted with extreme caution, as they concern data from an aggregate level, placed outside the context of the individual case studies.

² Epsilon (represented by the Greek ϵ), as the most simple measure of association, has been used (see the appendix for the calculations). Epsilon takes a value between 0 and 100. An alternative statistical technique is the Ψ (Phi value) based on the χ^2 (Chi square). This technique was not used because it requires that the cell frequencies in bivariate tables are 5 or higher, a criterion which could not always be met (this was also a problem when making partial tables to control associations for spuriousness or interaction). Given the limited size of the data set and the status of the data, more complex multivariate techniques could not be used.

Table 9.8
Associations between factors and outcomes

factor	Leburton	Tindemans V	Van Agt II	Lubbers I	ALL CASES (ϵ value)
coalition size	o	o	+	+	(14)
internal party unity	+/-	-/+	-	+	43
negotiators in government	+/-	-/+	o	+/-	40
prime ministerial support	-	-/+	-	+/-	41
coalition committees	+/o	o	-	o	(12)
personal relationships	n.a.	-	-	n.a.	n.a.
economic situation/events	-	o	-	+	n.a.

key to symbols:

- + direct (positive) association between (presence) factor and success
- direct (positive) association between (absence) factor and failure
- o no association
- n.a. not assessed (no quantification made, or not for all arrangements)

Let us consider the factors somewhat more closely, without taking note of the specific contexts in which they did or did not play a part. This may be done from two different perspectives, involving different levels of abstraction. In the first perspective, the focus is on the mechanism of reciprocal control and the factors, among which coalition size, which may have strengthened or weakened this mechanism. The crucial elements here are relative payoffs and the structure of the policy making agenda. At this level of abstraction, parties are treated as rational unitary actors. The relevance of economic developments and events is discussed in the margin of this perspective.

Second, at a somewhat lower level of abstraction, I consider the factors that may have influenced the degree of faithfulness to the coalition agreement among and within the coalition parties. By 'faithfulness' I mean willingness but also the capacity to interpret arrangements. I consider differences between policy making arenas and the factors which may have played a part in these arenas. From this perspective, parties are not unitary actors.

Coalition parties, policy payoffs, and cooperation

The number of coalition parties was seen in connection with the mechanism of reciprocal control. The basic assumption was that policy arrangements seldom contain equal payoffs for all coalition parties, which means that an arrangement is seen as 'costly' by at least one party, not only before but also after the government has taken office. At the same

time, coalition parties were assumed to be committed to arrangements because of the threat of 'punishment' by other parties if cooperation was given up unilaterally. This is what, in the present context, is understood by reciprocal control, the expected consequence being that coalition politics becomes a *cooperative game*.

Reciprocal control was assumed to be most effective if there are two coalition parties, which so to speak are each other's hostages, a situation with mutual blackmail potential. In multiparty coalitions, the temptation to propose policies which deviate from the coalition agreement or to ignore arrangements unilaterally was assumed to be stronger because of the greater complexity of interparty relationships within such coalitions. Not only were other parties expected to have difficulties in agreeing on how to react to the 'disloyal' behaviour of one party, it was also held to be possible that one or more of these other parties might more or less actively support deviations from the agreement.

The proportion of implemented arrangements was larger in the Lubbers I two party coalition than in the multiparty coalitions, which mostly implemented less than half the number of arrangements. Though this may suggest that the number of parties made a difference, reciprocal control as an enforcement mechanism seems to have been affected more directly by the cumulative experiences of parties during the policy making process. This not only weakened reciprocal control in line with the duration of the coalition in office but also and more dramatically, resulted in a definitive end of cooperation between parties. This must be seen in connection to the structure of the agenda, which was often such that arrangements in different fields were discussed sequentially rather than simultaneously (which was how, in some cases at least, government formation negotiations were organised). One reason for this is that the issues were of great political importance and the capacity of the government to deal with such issues, even if detailed compromises were made, was limited. Even when arrangements in different fields were dealt with at the same time, different constitutional requirements meant that decision making in these fields did not proceed at the same pace.

It is important to realise that the tolerance limit for parties during policy making may include a time element. If during government formation a party made concessions on arrangements in a particular field (which were just below the party's tolerance limit in that field, for example), such concessions may become more difficult to accept when the relevant issues are on the agenda and are dealt with in isolation from arrangements in other fields. Parties, or perhaps groups within parties, are likely to continue to consider their payoffs from such arrangements critically, as well as their expected payoffs from other issues in the future.

Two types of situations seem to have occurred in the case studies. To begin with, one party may have tolerated concessions but have arrived at a point where the perceived costs exceed the expected benefits from the elaboration or the implementation of other arrangements in the near future. This seems to have been the estimation of the PSB-BSP

in the Leburton coalition. The Socialists had cooperated on school policy but began to feel that the elaboration and implementation of arrangements on regionalisation and economic policy, especially governmental support for industry in Wallonia, was proceeding too slowly. Hence the PSB-BSP withdrew from the government.

The second type of situation is actually the reverse and exists if one party has benefited from policy decisions in a certain field but expects few gains from arrangements in other areas which still have to be elaborated and implemented. This may be because major concessions were made during government formation on these issues or because such concessions must be made in the future. The CVP, or at least an influential group of Flemish Christian Democrats in the Tindemans V coalition may have looked upon things in this way after the party had made gains in the areas of financial and socio-economic policy and was then confronted with arrangements on regionalisation which contained important concessions which were found to be ever more difficult to sell in Flanders. In this coalition, the PSB-BSP cooperated on budgetary and socio-economic policy while still expecting substantive payoffs from the implementation of the Egmont-Stuyvenberg pact in the near future.

In the two Dutch coalitions, things seem to have been either more balanced in terms of payoffs during the life of the government (the Lubbers I coalition) or in terms of the *lack* of substantive payoffs, which was typical of the Van Agt II coalition even at the time it took office. In this last case, the predominance of issues in the field of financial and socio-economic policy on the agenda meant that no payoffs from issues in other areas could be obtained. The symmetrical character of the agenda (the intentions most strongly preferred by the PvdA were those strongly resisted by the CDA and vice versa) is likely to have contributed to the early breakdown of the coalition.

In the multiparty coalitions, the obtained and expected policy payoffs of parties in the first half year (or even in the first few months) may have weakened reciprocal control as an enforcement mechanism, which eventually led to the end of cooperation between these parties. With respect to this last point, electoral prospects may enter the picture as a pull factor, though in the present study its strength is not considered to be as large as the strength and relevance of policy payoffs. Nonetheless, future electoral performance may play a part, either in terms of expected gains in the short term or in terms of losses which are expected to increase as the coalition continues. An illustration of the former possibility may be found in the Tindemans V coalition, in which electoral motives may have contributed to the resignation of the CVP. This party expected electoral gains from attacking the VU (Covell, 1982: 463). An example from the 'preventive' sphere is that of the PSB-BSP in the Leburton coalition. For this party resignation may have been a means to limit electoral punishment for having sold out the interests of the voters, that is, the regional interests of Wallonia. Finally, in the Van Agt II case, intransigence within the CDA towards the PvdA may have been induced by restored hopes within the government section of this party for a coalition with the VVD after the next parliamentary elections.

In all three cases, the results of the elections after the breakdown of the coalition conformed to the expectations of the parties that had favoured the elections.

Economic developments

Exogenous factors which might encroach in the enforcement of arrangements on financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy are macroeconomic developments and events. In all of the four cases drawn from the 1970s and 1980s, general economic problems formed part of the general context of policy making. This was also the case while the arrangements were formulated but the parties could anticipate economic developments beyond government formation only to a limited extent.

In the case studies, mixed evidence was found for the assumption that continuing economic and financial problems bring parties, either unilaterally or multilaterally, to deviate from intentions and goals set in the coalition agreement. In the four cases, 'bad news' was certainly the rule rather than the exception, though ministers of finance are probably biased to such bad news. Continuing financial and economic difficulties did not, however, lead to the same reactions from parties or ministers across the cases. Arrangements were stretched up or conversely were given more emphasis during policy making. In this more general sense, economic developments do seem to have motivated parties in their behaviour with respect to arrangements on financial and economic policy, and this often involved conflict between those advocating government spending and those taking a more monetarist stand (this conflict line existed mainly between parties, though sometimes it also divided parties internally, as in the CDA in the Van Agt II case). This conflict became more party political in character as arrangements became more general, which often reflected persisting disagreement on policy priorities. Special mention must be made of the withdrawal of the foreign partner in the oil refinery project in the case of the Leburton coalition. This withdrawal meant that an important ambition of the Wallonian Socialists remained unfulfilled and it also formed the immediate cause (if not the only cause) of the coalition breakdown.

A multiplicity of policy making arenas

Thusfar we have considered the problem of enforcement at the level of the coalition and the parties, there also may have been favourable or unfavourable conditions at lower levels. These lower levels in part represent different formal and informal policy making arenas, such as the government, parliament and, if formed, coalition committees. The point of departure here is the notion that the implementation of arrangements becomes more difficult as policy making is transferred to formal arenas, which are different from

the government formation arena in which the arrangements were formulated. In a more formal arena, the greater emphasis on constitutional requirements and formal procedures during policy making and the possibility of opposition due to the presence of more and different party spokespersons may hinder the smooth elaboration and implementation of arrangements. The two central questions here concern the way in which differences between informal and formal arenas have been reduced and the way in which this has influenced the process of enforcement.

The participation of negotiators in the government³ was mentioned as one way by which implementation might be facilitated. This factor may be seen as a structural way of allowing moral commitments to be 'internalised' within the government but it also includes an 'economic' aspect, which is that the perceived costs of renegotiating arrangements may increase as party prominents have spent a lot of time and energy on policy bargaining during the formation of the government. Moreover, negotiators may have the capacity to 'read between the lines' of written arrangements, which is especially relevant if these arrangements are open to different interpretations.

Outsiders are assumed to have more difficulties with this; as ministers without a personal involvement in policy bargaining, they may be less inclined to implement arrangements, as they may feel confronted with *faits accomplis* which infringe in their ministerial autonomy. When arrangements are general or vague, relative outsiders may also have more problems in making interpretations.

Another and complementary way in which the parties might reduce the detachment of arrangements from the founding fathers of the coalition, was to set up an informal committee as an alternative policy making arena. To be effective, such committees should not only contain the 'founding fathers', usually party leaders but more generally they should contain heavyweights from different party sections. If these are present, the basis of the committee's activities may be broad.

Both of these ways which in theory could facilitate enforcement, are likely to depend at least in part on the internal unity of the coalition parties and on the presence or absence of prime ministerial support for the coalition agreement. The quality of personal relationships may also play a part, though in the case studies only clear instances of interpersonal clashes were taken into account. Internal unity is important, for example because an informal rule of behaviour seems to be that on generally salient issues no *ad hoc* legislative coalitions are formed unilaterally by individual coalition parties with

³ Cabinet portfolios are not necessarily the same as 'negotiation portfolios'. The latter type of portfolio is mostly created during government formation on an *ad hoc* basis. The 'jurisdiction' of negotiators may differ appreciably from that of ministers in charge of a particular cabinet portfolio. Party prominents have often a say in all areas discussed during government formation, yet they obtain one (Netherlands) or perhaps a few (Belgium) portfolios.

parties from the opposition. This increases the need for internal unity, or in any case for discipline, within parties. Party leaders in Belgium and the Netherlands usually exercise strong pressure on ministers and parliamentary representatives to keep up with the general party line but they cannot always prevent dissent; indeed, party leaders themselves may disagree. Negotiators in party delegations may also represent different groups or factions.

Arena and actor characteristics

From table 9.8 it can be seen that the presence or absence of negotiators, the support or opposition of the prime minister and internal unity or disunity within parties is more or less clearly associated with outcomes. The strength of the associations at aggregate level are also given. When these associations are given independently from each other, it is possible that factors have interacted.

Internal party unity was seen in terms of the absence of policy conflict between more or less institutionalised groups or party sections, that is, the ministerial group, the parliamentary group and the extraparlimentary party. All the case studies contained indications that the internal unity factor was relevant to outcomes, though not to the same extent in all coalitions. In Belgium, the Christian Democrats were divided internally on regionalisation and these divisions in the Tindemans V coalition were reinforced by a rivalry for the party leadership between the prime minister and the party president.⁴ In the Netherlands, internal party division seems to have been most difficult to control in parliament. Government decisions on nuclear weapons for example obtained a majority only with the support of opposition parties. The reason why internal disunity did not prevent decisions being taken may have been that the dissent did not become manifest at the level of the leadership within the CDA. Elaboration of the mostly general arrangements on 'immaterial' issues seems to have foundered mainly because the parliamentary groups did not feel like rubber stamping policies developed by the cabinet. The general character of implicit compromises on these matters also reflected the absence of substantive agreement between the parliamentary groups during government formation. With respect to financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy in the Lubbers I coalition, however, internal dissensus within parties seems to have been limited, or it did not become manifest. Moreover, on finance especially, decision making was strongly cabinet centered.

The presence or absence of negotiators appears to be associated with success and failure in most cases, with the Van Agt II coalition forming an important exception.⁵ In the case of the Van Agt II coalition, the factor of ministerial background seems rather to

⁴ Though internal divisions within the (officially unitary) Socialist party were less manifest, the PSB-BSP split after the government fell.

⁵ Government reshuffles, when these occurred, did not affect this association.

have been counterproductive, which is likely to have been due, at least in part, to the extremely troublesome personal relationship between the party leaders of the CDA and the PvdA, who were prime minister and vice prime minister respectively. Though the factor of personal relationships has not been quantified (this was not really possible), the Van Agt II case indicates that it may interact with the presence of negotiators in such a way that the implementation of arrangements is hindered rather than facilitated.

Another factor that interacts with ministerial background is internal party unity. The presence or absence of negotiators appears to have a much stronger association with outcomes when the parties were homogenous internally than when internal divisions existed in the relevant fields.⁶ With a lack of agreement within the coalition parties, even ministers who were earlier involved in the formulation of arrangements had difficulty in securing the viability of arrangements. This may have been because these ministers faced opposition from within their own parties in the government, or perhaps because no real consensus existed among themselves. Arrangements in the relevant fields were mostly general, which was not only because parties could not reach substantive agreement but was used sometimes to appease intraparty conflict, as for example with respect to the cruise missiles issue in the two Dutch coalitions. A more general reason is that ministerial background makes less difference as policy making shifts from the government to parliament. This was especially relevant in the Dutch cases, as in this country ministers cannot take a seat in parliament. Though it is true that the parliamentary groups also contained negotiators, these formed only one (and sometimes a rather small) part of the parliamentary groups. This is consistent with the finding that in a substantial part of the cases, especially general arrangements in the fields of 'immaterial' policy, the locus of failure was parliament.

One of the roles of the prime minister is to be an arbitrator in conflicts between ministers, who act as departmental heads or as party spokespersons. Prime ministerial behaviour, however, may also be of a different nature. He or she may be involved directly in conflict, as was the situation in the Van Agt II coalition and the situation that occurred shortly before the fall of the Tindemans V government. The prime minister may also play a part through more or less active support of or opposition to arrangements. All the cases studies contained indications that this factor was relevant, both in a 'positive' and a 'negative' sense.

Typically in all cases except that of the Van Agt II coalition, the prime minister seems to have been most positive and active in guarding the implementation of arrangements on financial and socio-economic policy. Van Agt did so only with respect to that part of the agreement concerning retrenchment policy. In Belgium, the prime minister in both cases was a relative 'unitarist' who had supported regionalisation only half heartedly during government formation, and began to question arrangements openly

⁶ See the appendix for data on which these observations are based.

during the life of the government. One difference, however, is that Leo Tindemans (CVP) seems to have been more active in his resistance than Edmund Leburton (PSB-BSP). In the Netherlands Ruud Lubbers (CDA) did not really underwrite intentions in the fields of immaterial policy, on which the VVD had insisted but failures in these areas are difficult to attribute to particular actions or inaction from the side of the prime minister.

The factor of prime ministerial support must be seen in conjunction with ministerial background, in that success has been most frequent when negotiators were present and also the prime minister underwrote the agreement and guided the enforcement of arrangements. Failure has been most frequent when negotiators were absent and the prime minister either remained passive or actively proposed policies which were against the letter or the spirit of the coalition agreement. Further, where the outcome was a failure in the sense that no substantive decisions were taken or approved, parties were often divided internally.

Invisible politics, visible results?

Another way in which the implementation process might be smoothed was by transferring policy making to informal arenas with the same characteristics as the government formation arena. More in particular, coalition committees were assumed to facilitate the elaboration and implementation of compromises. Such committees could be or become more or less institutionalised as 'extrainstitutional' policy making arenas.

From looking at table 9.8, however, the existence of coalition committees is associated with success only in some instances and certainly not in all coalitions, while the absence of coalition committees is hardly associated with failure (at aggregate level this is expressed by the low ε value in table 9.8). The most conspicuous case of a coalition committee which was unable to guard effectively the implementation of arrangements was the group of party presidents in the Tindemans V coalition. The party presidents, referred to by Tindemans as the coalition 'junta', had been involved actively in the drafting of legislation on regionalisation but eventually failed to guide this legislation through parliament. The party presidents were important in this areas also in the Leburton coalition. In the Van Agt II case, discussions were concentrated in the cabinet, or more precisely in the 'pentagon' consisting of the prime minister and the four key ministries in the area of financial and economic policy. In this coalition, few outlets for interparty and interpersonal tensions existed. It would be rather speculative, however, to argue that in this case the presence of coalition committees would have facilitated conflict resolution and the elaboration of arrangements. Finally, in the Lubbers I coalition, regular informal meetings of the top of the cabinet together with the parliamentary leaders could not prevent many of the arrangements outside the sphere of financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy remaining unimplemented.

At this point, it must be realised that when speaking of coalition committees, I refer to informal structures 'above' the cabinet. In this respect, a difference ensues

between Belgium and the Netherlands, as coalition committees in the actual sense have been relatively common only in Belgium. These committees, such as the school pact committee, were formed to deal with policy in a particular area, or to deal with the most important and often controversial issues, the 'prerogative' of the party presidents. In the Netherlands, interparty discussions were more often between ministers at subcabinet level, or, less frequently, between ministers and parliamentary leaders. This difference corresponds with the general patterns found in the two countries in a recent comparative study of the functioning of cabinets in Western Europe. In Belgium, the extraparliamentary parties, embodied by the party presidents, have been found to be prominent in party summits, whereas in the Netherlands ministers are in contact with parliamentary leaders and discuss matters informally at subcabinet level (De Winter, 1993: 163-171).

If I take these differences into account and broaden the scope to informal policy making arenas both 'above' and 'below' cabinet level, the relationship with outcomes becomes somewhat more clear, especially in the Netherlands. Most decisions on financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy based on the coalition agreement of the Lubbers I coalition were actually taken in the 'pentagon', the group of five ministers with direct responsibility in these areas. The Dutch government decisions on nuclear weapons were prepared within an informal committee of ministers, which was set up especially for this purpose. In Belgium, the government was less central to the process of enforcement, so that the role of informal structures at subcabinet level is also likely to have been more limited; it seems to have been limited mainly to financial and socio-economic policy.

Still, the existence of informal 'coalition machinery' in one form or another in all fields of policy did not prevent failure being a common outcome. This factor has only partly reduced the basic problem of differences between policy making arenas. In the parliamentary arena, where policies had to be formally approved, sometimes by a two thirds majority, centrifugal forces were often strong while the need for internal discipline was high. If coalition committees or their functional equivalents did not contain parliamentary leaders who were able or willing to control their groups in parliament, the stage of parliamentary scrutiny in the policy making process remained a risk factor.

The enforcement of coalition agreements as a dynamic process

The different factors brought under the heading of arena and actor characteristics may be seen in conjunction with economic developments and with the extent of reciprocal control in coalitions. In this sense, the two perspectives discussed above are not in conflict but are complementary.

The enforcement of arrangements is a highly dynamic process. This process may be envisaged as a game at coalition level, containing subgames within parties. The

dynamic character of the enforcement process is reflected in the iterative character of both games; they are played many times rather than once, with parties reacting on and anticipating the moves of others. Intraparty games influence the way in which the coalition game is played and through this also the direction of the outcomes. The game between parties takes place in different arenas which may be more or less favourable to the elaboration and implementation of arrangements and variation in this respect may exist between different policy fields. With regard to these arenas, cooperation may be facilitated at least in part by attributes of the coalition and the composite elements, which reduce, though never remove, the differences between the government formation arena and the formal decision making bodies, especially parliament, where coalition policy must be approved. The factors which seem to be relevant here are the degree of prime ministerial support, the existence of informal coalition committees or their functional equivalents and especially, the extent of internal party unity.

Arenas form the structural aspect, while the mechanism of reciprocal control relates more directly to the enforcement process (the actual playing of the game) and the time that this process lasts. The shape of the coalitional agenda, or that part set during government formation and the nature of the policy making process during the life of governments are important in this respect. In the process of policy making, politically important issues are often dealt with sequentially rather than simultaneously. This is not something written in the house rules of cabinets or parliaments but rather the consequence of the usually limited capacity of the government or parliament to deal with different matters of 'high politics' at the same time. It is also the consequence of formal or constitutional requirements in the legislative process which mean that legislation is not drafted and approved overnight.

When arrangements in fields that are first on the agenda benefit all parties (and the agenda in this sense is in balance), no serious problems need to arise. Often, however, the distribution of payoffs resulting from government formation is such that some parties are relative 'winners' in one field, while other parties may have made more gains in different arenas.⁷ The phenomenon of relative deprivation of parties with respect to their *actual* policy payoffs may occur if arrangements in one or a few fields are turned into formal decisions. A party or a group within a party may come to feel that it has obtained few payoffs since the moment of taking office and may also expect, for various reasons, few payoffs in the near future. In such circumstances, there is not much of a 'punishment like' nature that the deprived party may fear (at least from within the coalition) and it may give up cooperating altogether and withdraw from the coalition. This last option may become more attractive if the party is also motivated by electoral

⁷ Note, that only to a certain extent may this be because the salience of matters in different fields differs between parties. In the present study, the focus was on those matters which were salient to two or more parties.

considerations, such as expected gains from anticipated elections or an expected increase in losses if the party remains in office. In the parliamentary arena, where accountability towards the voters plays a part, such considerations may come through in the behaviour of parties, or groups or prominents within parties. In the present study, cooperation ended prematurely in three of the four coalitions; in all three cases, coalition breakdown was a direct consequence of frustrated expectations and conflict on issues which were among the central topics of the coalition agreement. Only in the Lubbers I coalition did the distribution of actual policy payoffs in relevant fields form a sufficiently solid basis, and probably one of the reasons for keeping the coalition going. Despite this, arrangements were still elaborated and implemented less faithfully in this coalition and it seems, under less mutual pressure as time passed. With less dramatic consequences than for the other coalitions, the interest in cooperation within both coalition parties waned as the elections approached.

CONCLUSION

The different ways in which parties forming a government deal with controversial issues are likely to have different consequences once the coalition government is in office. This general notion has underlied this study of the functions and effects of coalition agreements, with a special focus on Belgium and the Netherlands. A general assumption was that parties in these countries are driven by policy considerations when conducting government formation negotiations. Controversial issues can be placed on the agenda and policies be predefined to a higher or lower degree of specificity, but the scope of action of the government or of the coalition in general may also be limited by *not* placing issues on the agenda or by procrastinating on substantial decisions. These possibilities were seen to reflect the functions of coalition agreements as perceived by the parties.

The coalition agreements of the Belgian and Dutch governments considered in this study were relevant during the life of these governments. This relevance, however, has a duality, in that arrangements have had both 'positive' and 'negative' outcomes. First, in a more general and 'neutral' sense, the coalition agreement has constituted part (and mostly the major part) of the coalition agenda, which contained the government agenda. Before anything else, the present study provides broad support for the idea that coalition agreements have an agenda function.

The agenda contained issues on which substantive agreement was established, but also points of persisting disagreement which were concealed more or less carefully. With respect to the conflict aspect, limitation by the parties of the government's scope of action

by procedural arrangements was found to be the most effective way of preventing conflict. The outcomes of arrangements on the substance of issues were less 'peaceful', though here the degree of specificity of arrangements has made a difference. Explicit compromises, the most specific with regard to the content of policy, were modestly effective in terms of conflict prevention; conflict recurred in just over half the number of cases. As was expected, the least effective type of arrangement were general arrangements which placed issues on the agenda while leaving conflicts over the contents of policy unresolved. Absence of conflict here was an exception. Indeed, two of the four coalitions collapsed over issues on which such general arrangements had been made.

The types of arrangements can also be related to the degree of policy predefinition. Explicit compromises were expected to 'predetermine' policies, while the function of general implicit compromises was seen more in terms of policy indication, with the intentions requiring to be specified.

This distinction, clear as it may seem, was not clearly sustained by the findings, at least not in the sense that the two types of arrangements had markedly different outcomes in terms of implementation. The only difference was that explicit compromises were implemented relatively more often without conflict, but still in only one fifth of the cases. Coalition agreements have modified policy making in a general way mostly, with further negotiations following in the majority of cases, something which was expected in the case of general implicit compromises, but not in the case of explicit compromises. In other words, the coalition agreements dealt with in this study seem to have functioned more as a framework than as a package of blueprints for policy decisions. To illustrate this, take the work of the 'editorial committee' of the Tindemans V coalition, which set out to 'fill in the possible gaps' in the Egmont pact, as it was called euphemistically (KHA, 1977: 707).

This brings us to the important point that both the formulation of coalition agreements and policy making on the basis of these coalition agreements are part of a highly dynamic process. In this study, I have found that once in office, parties mostly took arrangements in the coalition agreement as the point of departure for policy making. Even if compromises included in the agreement were detailed, however, concrete policy decisions often did not evolve immediately, or indeed before the *next* government had taken office. Apart from the time usually taken by formal legislative procedures, this was also due to compromises giving rise to 'second thoughts' or differences in interpretation. In the same example taken from the Tindemans V coalition, quite a few sessions of 'editorial committees' in subsequent coalitions were necessary before legislation on regionalisation was passed in parliament, in August 1980. If arrangements are more general it was sometimes, in a paradoxical way, the commitment of coalition parties to each other which prevented legislation being approved, or indeed submitted to parliament. The reason is that despite dissensus within the coalition, individual coalition parties refrained from forming *ad hoc* legislative alliances with external parties, as this was seen

to form a major threat to the continuity of the coalition. At least in terms of policy preferences, such legislative coalitions were a real possibility when issues dividing religious and secular parties were on the agenda.

Relatively the most substantive results were reached in the fields of socio-economic and financial/budgetary policy. In part this may be related to the formal requirements of the annual budgetary process, which formed a constraint on policy making even if matters were party political rather than just interdepartmental. In these areas, however, failure also was important and in two cases this failure even involved the collapse of the coalition.

The process of policy formulation in which coalition agreements are a relevant element is called as *cumulative* process by Peterson et al. (1983: 74). This term may suggest that arrangements in coalition agreements are implemented or elaborated by the coalition which formulated these arrangements or by the following coalition as 'work in progress' so to speak. The case studies however suggest strongly that the dynamics of policy making in coalitions is not aptly characterised in this way, at least not if this is to be a general characterisation. Apart from the possibility that arrangements are intended to remove issues from the substantive agenda for a shorter or longer time, arrangements containing positive and substantive statements may also be (and in this study appeared to be) negative reference points for parties in subsequent coalitions, inducing these parties to formulate alternatives to what was agreed on before. This inclination is likely to be (and in the case studies was found to be) strongest when a subsequent coalition contains different parties. Again, the different arrangements on regionalisation policy provide an example. Other examples include secondary education reform (Netherlands), legislation on abortion (Belgium) and with probably the highest frequency of change, priorities given to particular goals in financial and socio-economic policy. Moreover, intentions placed on the agenda by certain parties may even be removed altogether by parties forming the next coalition, as happened with the employment plan after the dissolution of the Van Agt II government.

The sometimes noncumulative character of policy making as it shifts between the government formation arena and the formal political institutions may also be seen in the broader context of the bargaining system. Belgium and the Netherlands are depicted as multipolar systems. This type of bargaining system was seen to be a context in which comprehensive and relatively specific coalition agreements emerge, but it also seems to be a context which, apart from other favourable and unfavourable conditions at the level of individual coalitions and their constituent elements, is generally unfavourable to the enforcement of agreements. Next to centrifugal forces generated within coalitions, relevant external parties (perhaps not all as really strong 'poles' in the system) also play a part in the estimations that individual coalition parties make of the benefits of continuing cooperation with the coalition partner or partners. This seems especially true for the

Christian Democrats or for influential groups within the CDA in the Netherlands and the CVP in Belgium, which in two of the four coalitions aimed at the end of cooperation and a change of partners during the formation of a new government.

In this study, I have dealt with four coalitions taken from two countries, which for obvious reasons does not allow sweeping generalisations about the role of coalition agreements in Belgium and the Netherlands. Nonetheless, the case studies, which were set up as explorations into the relationship between the formation and the life (and end) of coalitions, have resulted in a picture which is sufficiently broad to maintain that, in the two low countries, coalition agreements are important to coalition politics, even if often not in a way that corresponds to the optimist's point of view.

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Appendix — Data on Coalitions

LEBURTON COALITION

policy field/issue	type of arrangement	factors				outcome			
		<i>2 party coalition</i>	<i>internal negotiators</i>	<i>support</i>	<i>coalition committees</i>	<i>personal relations</i>	<i>economy</i>	<i>conflict</i>	<i>implementation</i>
<i>language/ regionalisation</i>	<i>ex pro gen</i>								
facilities Voer area	x	no	no	no	no	n.a.	no	yes	
constitutional revision	x	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	no	yes	
parliamentary committee	x						no	yes	
[regional councils	x						no	no]	
regional councils	x						yes	no	
regional executives	x						no	no	
[regional executives (Brussels)	x						yes	no]	
regional finances	x						yes	no	
regional finances	x						yes	no	
boundaries Brussels	x						yes	no	
alternative boundaries Brussels	x						yes	no	
[Brussels electoral district	x						yes	no]	
language Brussels	x						no	yes	
<i>financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy</i>									
pensions	x	no	yes	yes	no	n.a.	no	yes	
state control in industry		no	yes	yes	no	n.a.	yes	no	

LEBURTON COALITION (CONTINUED)

policy field/issue	type of arrangement	factors				outcome		
		<i>ex pro gen</i>	<i>internal unity</i>	<i>negotiators support</i>	<i>coalition committees</i>	<i>personal economy</i>	<i>conflict</i>	<i>implementation</i>
<i>ethical questions</i>								
contraception	x	yes	yes	no	n.a.	no	yes	
labortion	x	yes	yes	no	n.a.	yes	no]	
<i>school policy</i>								
[general school plan	x	yes	yes	no	n.a.	yes	yes	
wages clerical teachers	x	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	yes	yes	
general school fund	x	etc.				yes	yes	
state school fund	x					yes	yes	
additional state school fund	x					yes	yes	
private school fund	x					yes	yes	
interest loans private schools	x					yes	yes	
total number of arrangements	14	4	6					

key to symbols:

ex = explicit compromise, *pro* = procedural arrangement, *gen* = general implicit compromise
 Arrangements between parentheses were not implemented due to the premature end of the coalition after conflict on other issues.

TINDEMANS V COALITION

policy field/issue	type of arrangement	factors				outcome			
		2 party coalition	internal negotiators as min.	support pm.	coalition committees	personal relations	economy	conflict	implementation
<i>language/ regionalisation</i>	<i>ex pro gen</i>								
regional councils	x	no	no	no	yes	n.a.	yes	no	
regional executives	x	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	yes	no	
regional competences	x	etc.					no	no	
regional finances	x						no	no	
community councils	x						no	no	
community executives	x						yes	no	
community competences	x						no	no	
community finances	x						yes	no	
transitional stage	x						no	no	
subregions/provinces	x						yes	no	
Brussels boundaries	x						yes	no	
<i>financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy</i>									
deficit/taxes	x	no	yes	yes	no	n.a.	yes	yes	
linkage social benefits-prices	x	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	no	yes	
employment policy	x	etc.					yes	yes	
state control in industry	x						yes	yes	
total number of arrangements	12							3	

key to symbols:

ex = explicit compromise, *pro* = procedural arrangement, *gen* = general implicit compromise

VAN AGT II COALITION

policy field/issue	type of arrangement <i>ex pro gen</i>	factors				outcome		
		<i>2 party coalition</i>	<i>internal negotiators as min.</i>	<i>support pm.</i>	<i>condition committees</i>	<i>personal relations</i>	<i>economy</i>	<i>conflict implementation</i>
<i>financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy</i>								
employment plan	x	no	yes	no	no	neg.	yes	no
budget deficit	x	ibid.	ibid.	yes	ibid.	ibid.	yes	no
total size cuts	x	etc.		no			yes	no
general distribution cuts	x			yes			yes	no
filling in cuts	x			no			yes	no
level rates and taxes	x			yes			no	no
decrease incomes minima	x			no			yes	no
linkage incomes-soc. benefits	x			no			no	yes
[fiscal facilities mortgagees	x			no			no	no]
[fiscal system mortgages	x			no			no	no]
[directions investments	x			no			yes	no]
<i>nuclear policy</i>								
[existing nuclear power-stations	x	no	yes	no	no	n.a.	no	no]
new nuclear power-stations	x	no	yes	yes	no	n.a.	no	yes
nuclear weapons	x	no	yes	no	no	n.a.	no	yes
<i>school policy</i>								
[secondary education reform	x	ibid.	yes	yes	no	n.a.	no	no]
total number of arrangements	5	3	7					

key to symbols:

ex = explicit compromise, *pro* = procedural arrangement, *gen* = general implicit compromise
 Arrangements between parentheses were not implemented due to the premature end of the coalition after conflict on other issues.

LUBBERS I COALITION

policy field/issue	type of arrangement <i>ex pro gen</i>	factors				outcome			
		<i>2 party coalition</i>	<i>internal negotiators as min.</i>	<i>support pm.</i>	<i>coalition committees</i>	<i>personal relations</i>	<i>economy</i>	<i>conflict</i>	<i>implementation</i>
<i>financial/budgetary and socio-economic policy</i>									
total size cuts	x	yes	yes	yes	no	n.a.	neg.	yes	yes
general distribution cuts	x	ibid.	ibid.	yes	ibid.	ibid.	ibid.	no	yes
budget deficit	x			yes				yes	yes
level of rates and taxes	x			no				yes	no
cuts in departmental budgets	x			yes				yes	yes
cuts in major sectors				yes				yes	yes
spending minima + employment	x			yes				no	yes
cuts in departmental staff	x			yes				no	no
cuts in social benefits	x			yes				yes	yes
linkage incomes-soc. benefits	x			yes				yes	yes
income levelling	x			yes				yes	yes
taxation double income couples	x			yes				yes	yes
postbank	x			yes				no	yes
<i>nuclear policy</i>									
cruise missiles	x	yes	no	yes	no	n.a.	n.a.	yes	yes
existing nuclear military tasks		yes	no	yes	no	n.a.	n.a.	yes	yes
<i>school policy</i>									
legislation secondary									
education reform	x	yes	no	yes	no	n.a.	n.a.	yes	no
definitive system	x	yes	no	yes	no	n.a.	n.a.	no	yes

LUBBERS I COALITION (CONTINUED)

policy field/issue	type of arrangement <i>ex pro gen</i>	factors					outcome			
		<i>2 party coalition</i>	<i>internal unity</i>	<i>negotiators as min.</i>	<i>support pm.</i>	<i>coalition committees</i>	<i>personal relations</i>	<i>economy</i>	<i>conflict</i>	<i>implementation</i>
<i>media policy</i>										
foreign broadcasting	x	yes	yes	no	yes	no	n.a.	n.a.	yes	no
local + regional broadcasting	x	yes	yes	no	yes	no	n.a.	n.a.	yes	no
extended national broadcasting	x	yes	yes	no	yes	no	n.a.	n.a.	yes	no
<i>ethical questions</i>										
euthanasia	x	yes	yes	no	no	no	n.a.	n.a.	yes	no
equal treatment	x	yes	yes	no	no	no	n.a.	n.a.	yes	no

total number of arrangements 8 2 12

key to symbols:

ex = explicit compromise, *pro* = procedural arrangement, *gen* = general implicit compromise

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN FACTORS AND IMPLEMENTATION

(excluded are arrangements which were not implemented due to the premature end of the coalition after conflict on other issues)

The Epsilon value is a simple measure of the strength of an association (varying between 0 and 100), which is calculated by turning cell frequencies into percentages (in this case in horizontal direction) and subtracting these percentages in vertical direction. It is conventional to do this for the first column in a table (the value emerging from the second or any additional column may be different only in direction, positive or negative). In table A.1, the relevant percentages are 75 and 25 in the first row, and 32 and 86 in the second row. 75 - 32 is 43, which in this example is the ϵ value.

TABLE A.1
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN INTERNAL PARTY
UNITY AND IMPLEMENTATION

	implementation		
	yes	no	
internal party unity	24	8 (32)	
	9	19 (28)	
	(33)	(27) (60)	
	ϵ value = 43		

TABLE A.2
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN NEGOTIATORS AS
MINISTERS AND IMPLEMENTATION

	implementation		
	yes	no	
negotiators as ministers	26	11 (37)	
	7	16 (23)	
	(33)	(27) (60)	
	ϵ value = 40		

TABLE A.3
ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PRIME MINISTERIAL
SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION

	prime ministerial support		implementation	
	yes	no	yes	no
	21	6 (27)		
	12	21 (33)		
	(33)	(27) (60)		
	ϵ value = 41			

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN FACTORS AND IMPLEMENTATION (CONTINUED)

TABLE A.4

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN COALITION SIZE AND IMPLEMENTATION

	implementation			implementation		
	yes	no		yes	no	
two party	14	8	(22)	20	13	(33)
multiparty	19	19	(38)	13	14	(27)
	(33)	(27)	(60)	(33)	(27)	(60)

ϵ value = 14

ϵ value = 12

TABLE A.5

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN COALITION COMMITTEES AND IMPLEMENTATION

	coalition committees			implementation		
	yes	no		yes	no	
two party	14	8	(22)	20	13	(33)
multiparty	19	19	(38)	13	14	(27)
	(33)	(27)	(60)	(33)	(27)	(60)

ϵ value = 14

ϵ value = 12

TABLE A.6

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN NEGOTIATORS AS MINISTERS AND IMPLEMENTATION, CONTROLLED FOR INTERNAL PARTY UNITY

	negotiators			implementation		
	yes	no		yes	no	
two party	14	8	(22)	20	13	(33)
multiparty	19	19	(38)	13	14	(27)
	(33)	(27)	(60)	(33)	(27)	(60)

ϵ value = 89

TABLE A.7

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN NEGOTIATORS AS MINISTERS AND IMPLEMENTATION, CONTROLLED FOR INTERNAL PARTY UNITY

	negotiators			implementation		
	yes	no		yes	no	
two party	14	8	(22)	20	13	(33)
multiparty	19	19	(38)	13	14	(27)
	(33)	(27)	(60)	(33)	(27)	(60)

ϵ value = 89

TABLE A.8

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN NEGOTIATORS AS MINISTERS AND IMPLEMENTATION, CONTROLLED FOR INTERNAL PARTY UNITY

	negotiators			implementation		
	yes	no		yes	no	
two party	14	8	(22)	20	13	(33)
multiparty	19	19	(38)	13	14	(27)
	(33)	(27)	(60)	(33)	(27)	(60)

ϵ value = 89







